

West Bank land prices drop

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — West Bank land prices, which soared last year when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel signed an autonomy accord, have fallen along with once-high hopes of quick implementation of the agreement, a Palestinian newspaper said on Monday. Al Quds quoted Palestinian estate agents as saying prices have dropped by some 30 per cent from September, when the world watched Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shake hands, but are still up on a year ago. Commercial land in the town of Ramallah which rocketed from JD 150 per square metre to JD 250 after the agreement now fetches about JD 200. Land in well-to-do neighbourhoods around the town jumped from JD 50 per square metre to JD 95 when the agreement was signed but now averages about JD 70, the newspaper said. Estate agents say prices in Nablus and other West Bank towns have followed the same pattern as initial high expectations from the peace agreement have been dampened by snags in talks and a delay in the implementation of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho.



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Vatican heads towards dialogue with PLO

VATICAN CITY (R) — The Vatican said Monday it was stepping up its dialogue with Palestinians less than a month after its landmark recognition of Israel. An official statement said talks with a delegation Monday had been "the occasion for the start of a phase of more frequent contacts and a more official dialogue between the Holy See and Palestinian representatives." The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) delegation met Monsignor Claudio Celli, the Vatican's under-secretary for foreign affairs who signed last month's accord with Israel which cleared the way for full diplomatic ties between the Holy See and the Jewish state. Zuhdi Nashashibi, a PLO Executive Committee member who headed the delegation, had said before leaving Tunis that he would raise concerns about the accord's implications for Jerusalem. The Vatican supports a Palestinian homeland and wants Jerusalem, holy to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, to be protected by an internationally guaranteed statute. Monday's statement said the talks, which discussed the Middle East peace process and the status of Jerusalem, were cordial.

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London protesters seek Arad release

LONDON (AP) — Hundreds of demonstrators gathered opposite the Iranian embassy on Sunday to protest the captivity of an Israeli navigator whose plane was shot down over Lebanon in 1986. Israel says he may be alive and in the hands of Iranian Revolutionary guards, based in east Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. "The fate of Ron Arad must not be forgotten during these vital days of Middle East peace talks," said organiser Joyce Simson. "We've got to remind people that he's still there." The crowd released 2,647 balloons — one for each day of Arad's captivity, she said.

Italy may delay polls

ROME (R) — The Italian government said on Monday it could extend voting in landmark general elections on March 27 to March 28 to try to overcome Jewish objections that the polls will coincide with the Passover holiday. An official statement said Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi had contacted the speakers of the two houses of parliament and that the government was "ready to draft urgent legislative measures" that would allow observant Jews to vote.

Zhirinovskiy sidelined in nominations

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian parliamentary leaders have blocked ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy from heading the influential foreign affairs commission, a position which he had wanted, handing him instead the chairmanship of a newly-created "geopolitical" commission. It was not immediately clear what the geopolitical commission would do. Mr. Zhirinovskiy and fellow members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who took the second largest number of seats in the lower house of parliament, also failed to get the key security and defence parliamentary chairmanships.

2 neo-Nazis for jailed attack on U.S. team

SUHL, Germany (AFP) — Two neo-Nazi youths were jailed Monday for a racist attack on members of the U.S. luge (toboggan) Olympic team at Oberdorf in eastern Germany last October that caused international outrage. Silvio Eschrich, 21, who admitted punching Duncan Kennedy several times, was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison. Tino Voelkel, 16, who said he only pushed the U.S. athlete, was sentenced to one year.

U.N. to release Aided supporters

GENEVA (AP) — Secretary-General Boutros Ghali on Monday ordered the release of eight Somali faction fighters detained for attacks on U.N. soldiers last June. He also ordered all restrictions to be lifted on the movement of the fighters and their families. The move seemed designed to improve relations between the United Nations and General Aided.

Pakistani, Saudi leaders urge Afghan truce

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan President Farouq Ahmad Leghari and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd called for an immediate ceasefire in Afghanistan, in a joint communique issued Monday simultaneously from Jeddah and Islamabad. The communique followed talks between King Fahd and Leghari, who is currently on a visit to Saudi Arabia. They urged the Afghan factional leaders to "fear Allah in what they are doing to their own people and homeland" and enforce an "unconditional ceasefire" throughout the country. The communique called for "faithful" implementation of power-sharing accords which were signed by the Afghan factions in March last year in Islamabad and later in the Afghan city of Jalalabad.

Brown confident U.S.-Jordan economic ties could be boosted

U.S. secretary ends visit saying Washington moving towards addressing Jordan's concerns

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown held talks here on Sunday with Jordanian leaders and said afterwards that he had made headway in his mission to explore avenues for closer Jordanian-American economic cooperation.

Mr. Brown, who arrived early morning and left for Israel late evening, said that during his talks he discussed means to enhance economic and commercial relationship with Jordan and that progress was made in Washington's quest to protect American intellectual property rights.

Mr. Brown also promised that "some action" would be taken soon to address Jordan's concerns over the negative impact on its economy of the de facto blockade at Aqaba Port.

He also said that Washington was currently reviewing possible debt relief for Jordan. "That is an issue that has been raised with us and it is raised in every place we go,"

he said. "It is a complicated issue, there are some discussions going on at the present time. I know from the Jordanian perspectives (that) there is anxiety that those discussions be concluded at the earliest possible time."

Mr. Brown, who held talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Planning Minister Ziad Fariz, Finance Minister Sami Gamrah and Minister of Industry and Trade Rima Khalaf as well as Jordanian business leaders, was the first American secretary of commerce to visit the Kingdom.

"This has been an extraordinary productive day," he told a press conference after the conclusion of official talks and described his meeting with the Crown Prince as "a meeting of depth... a meeting of substance."

Dr. Khalaf told Jordan Television that Mr. Brown expressed high optimism during the talks that Jordan and the U.S. would be successful in their efforts to enhance economic

ties and also over prospects for increased American investment in the Kingdom.

Mr. Brown told the press conference that the United States considers the Middle East as an "extremely important" region and "will continue to reach out and play a constructive role not only in the peace process, but also in economic growth, economic development and economic development all over the globe."

Answering questions, Mr. Brown rejected an implied suggestion that there could be a linkage between Washington's quest to remove the secondary and tertiary Arab boycott of Israel and the continuing de facto blockade of Aqaba port by U.S.-led enforcers of the international sanctions against Iraq.

"The two issues are not connected at all," he said flatly.

"As far as the Gulf of Aqaba is concerned, I expressed Americans' sympathies and understanding for the economic consequences (of the blockade) on Jordan," he said. "We are trying to find ways in

which we will continue, of course, to be in compliance with the U.N. resolutions and at the same time in such a way that it is devastating to the Jordanian economy."

"I think you should expect some action soon," he said at a later point when pressed on the same question. "It is certainly a recommendation that I'll be making."

Mr. Brown said he pressed his quest for an end to the Arab boycott of American companies dealing with Israel during his talks here.

"We would like to see the boycott and other impediments to free trade and commerce removed," he said. "My role as secretary of state, of course, is to focus on secondary and tertiary boycotts because they have a direct impact on American businesses and industry."

Jordan has said that it is too premature to discuss any lifting of the boycott before tangible progress is achieved in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday confers with U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown in a meeting attended by Minister of Industry and Trade Rima Khalaf (AFP photo)

U.S. expects progress at next Israel-Syria talks

Damascus hails Geneva summit; Israelis sceptical, but plan Golan poll

A SENIOR U.S. official, briefing Israeli leaders on the Clinton-Assad summit, said Monday he expected Israel and Syria to move forward when they resume their talks next week.

U.S. State Department Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross said he believed Israel agreed with the U.S. assessment that the meeting of U.S. President Bill Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Sunday broke new ground in the peace efforts.

But a spokesman for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Israel made no formal response at the briefing to Mr. Assad's announcement that he is ready for "normal peaceful relations among all."

"The negotiations will resume in a more flexible forum with the heads of delegations. We should have and we would hope to see some movement and we think there's some potential," Mr. Ross told reporters after a 90-minute meeting with Mr. Rabin.

Israeli-Syria peace talks are due to reconvene next Monday, asked if there was any difference in the U.S. and Israeli view of Mr. Assad's

statements, Mr. Ross replied: "I don't think there's a disagreement."

But the Israeli spokesman said: "It was mainly the Israelis asking questions and the Americans giving answers."

Arab governments praised President Assad's offer of peace with Israel, while Iran vowed to keep on fighting the Jewish state.

Israel, meanwhile, said it would eventually take the issue of an extensive withdrawal from the Golan Heights to a public vote and hinted that a withdrawal was likely. Regaining the Golan has been Syria's overriding goal in the ongoing peace process.

"If the territorial price to be claimed from us in the Golan Heights is significant, the government will bring the issue to a referendum," said Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur, speaking for the government in a lengthy parliament debate on the Golan.

Earlier Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the U.S.-Syria summit created a more promising air in the peace talks and hinted that Israel would have to weigh serious decisions about peace with Syria.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said the summit left many questions unanswered: "The Syrians have already spoken in the past of normalisation but the question is: How is this linked to the notion of peace? What's the agenda? And at what price to Israel?"

At the Arab League in Cairo, Deputy Secretary General Adnan Omran said the summit gave rise to optimism.

"It is now clear that the United States showed understanding for the fact that restoring peace is linked to Israel's total withdrawal from occupied Arab territories," said Mr. Omar, himself a Syrian.

State-run Syrian newspapers splashed banner headlines across their front pages proclaiming the summit a "historic" breakthrough.

"The Geneva summit has rekindled hopes for realising lasting and genuine peace in the Middle East," the Tishrin daily said in a page-one editorial.

The Al Thawra daily stressed that Mr. Assad's offer was

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Majali: Jordan trying hard to achieve Arab reconciliation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan has been playing an active role towards bringing about reconciliation among Arab countries and is ready to embark on any step that would contribute to achieving that goal, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali was quoted as saying Monday.

"Jordan is doing all it can to achieve Arab reconciliation and is ready to do anything for the sake of the Arab Nation," Dr. Majali said in an interview published in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Al Itihad newspaper.

"A reconciliation should cover all types of cooperation, including political, economic, cultural and social."

His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the United States, the prime minister said, aims to give impetus to the peace process which is now facing some difficulties. The King is also seeking to bolster the Jordanian Armed Forces and will conduct a comprehensive review of Jordanian-U.S. relations, he said.

In reply to a question, Dr. Majali said Jordan appreciated and supported UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan's initiative to restore

Arab solidarity. The prime minister described Jordanian-UAR relations as brotherly ties and noted that Jordanians working in the UAE have always been treated on equal footing with the UAE people.

On Jordan's mediation to end the dispute among the leaders of Yemen, Dr. Majali said His Majesty King Hussein had delegated Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker to act as mediator carrying royal messages to the Yemeni leaders.

"Jordan considers any success of any Arab unity as success for Jordan, which seeks a greater Arab unity," he said. "It is up to the Yemeni brothers to resolve their problems amicably and Jordan would spare no effort to help them do that."

Noting that it was the Yemeni leaders who had requested the King's mediation, Dr. Majali said that the unity in Yemen concerns the whole Arab World and not Jordan and Yemen alone.

Commenting on coordination between Arab states involved in the peace process, Dr. Majali said Jordan is com-

mitted to that coordination, and it hopes that the Arab parties will succeed in exchanging land for peace in implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

"A just durable peace in Jordan's view entails the return of the usurped land and water rights and the end of suffering of the people in the region," he said.

Commenting on the Oslo accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), he said that the deal was meant as a declaration of principles and Jordan has no alternative but to support the Palestinians in their drive to regain their rights.

"Any gains achieved by the Palestinians would reflect positively on us because we are brothers and together form one nation," Dr. Majali said. On the future Palestinian-Jordanian relationship, he said that the people on the two sides of the River Jordan would have to decide on it and determine the nature of union between them when the time is right.

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Quake kills at least 22 in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A major earthquake rocked southern California before dawn Monday, sparking dozens of fires and destroying buildings and freeways, authorities said. At least 22 people were killed.

The 30-second tremor measured 6.6 on the Richter scale. It hit at 4:31 a.m. (1231 GMT), causing extensive damage in the San Fernando valley, a suburban area in northern Los Angeles.

As firemen, rescue workers and police struggled to rescue victims and restore order and services amid the chaos, California governor Pete Wilson called out the National Guard. He and Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan both declared states of emergency.

In Washington, President Bill Clinton pledged federal help and dispatched aides to California to coordinate assistance with local officials.

The epicentre of the quake was in northridge about 32 kilometres northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The quake rumbled along the 80-kilometre length of the San Fernando Valley.

Earlier story on page 8.

Iraq marks Gulf war with defiance

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Several thousand Iraqis marched through Baghdad on Monday shouting anti-American slogans and declaring loyalty to President Saddam Hussein on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Gulf war.

"Whether (U.S. President Bill) Clinton and (Saudi Arabia's King) Fahd like or not, Saddam is staying in power for ever," they chanted, waving their fists and calling for revenge.

Iraq's youth federation brought in members from around the country, including Kurds wearing traditional baggy trousers who danced in circles around pipes and drums and told reporters they came from the rebel provinces of Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya.

Disabled veterans of the 1991 war drove their wheelchairs with one hand and waved Saddam portraits in the other. Demonstrators with candles

paraded two coffins — one draped with the American flag, the other with Britain's — to the door of a U.N. building in Baghdad.

The protest in downtown Baghdad began five hours after President Saddam went on nationwide television to vow that the Iraqi people would not "stand idly by during the continuation of the (U.N.-imposed) blockade and the 'violation' of Iraqi airspace by U.S. and allied aircraft."

Denouncing Western nations and their Arab Gulf allies as "masters and slaves," President Saddam vowed to retaliate with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth" in case of further "aggression." But he made no specific threats and did not say what form any "retaliation" might take.

Despite the anti-Western protests, Prime Minister Ahmad Hussein Khudayyar said Sunday that Iraq wanted to reestablish ties with France, after breaking off diplomatic relations during the war, newspapers reported.

He was speaking to a French parliamentary delegation. Members of the delegation, on a private visit, said they would work on their return to France for a lifting of the U.N. sanctions in force since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. (see page 2).

The Baghdad demonstrators, mostly young men, hit the streets at 2:30 a.m. (2330 GMT), the time observed in Iraq as the start of the war on Jan. 17, 1991.

"All Iraq shouts: Saddam is my country's pride," he was emblazoned on banners waved by the demonstrators. "With steadfastness and reconstruction, we can destroy the blockade," others said.

Iraq has intensified its calls for a lifting of the sanctions, which have halted many imports as well as exports of its vast oil reserves. In preparatory moves for any easing of the sanctions, last year Iraq reopened its one sea link, the Shatt Al Arab which leads to the Gulf. Earlier this month, it inaugurated a petrochemical

plant on another economic lifeline, the overland tanker truck route to Turkey.

The press used the war anniversary to praise Iraq in splashy headlines of red, blue and green ink.

"The Iraqis prove now to the world that they are a part of the industrial era, not as consumers of Western industries, but through the way they reconstructed their national industry despite the blockade," Al Thawra newspaper, voice of the ruling Baath Party, said.

"A new Iraq and a new Iraq personality are emerging under the leadership of Saddam Hussein," Al Thawra added.

Despite the 1991 military defeat, the war that President Saddam once termed "the mother of all battles" is billed in Iraq as "victory and triumph" over the United States and its allies.

Al Qadisiyya, the Iraqi army newspaper, asserted Monday that the economic blockade of Iraq "has started to disintegrate as a result of Iraqi self-reliance."

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Sbaath. He flew to Tunis at the weekend to brief Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In Tunis, the PLO cautiously welcomed the outcome of the weekend summit between President Bill Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, and called for renewed Arab coordination on negotiations with Israel.

The call for fresh Arab coordination is the first hint of PLO concern that a separate Syria-Israel accord could strengthen Israel's position in its negotiations with the Palestinians (see page 2).

"If these results open the door for a just peace leading to the implementation of resolutions 242 and 425 concerning Syria and Lebanon, then we welcome them," PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Arafat said.

"We (would then) believe that they (the results) will constitute a supporting factor in the hard negotiations going on the Palestinian track," Mr. Arafat told Reuters.

Mr. Assad broke new ground in the peace process on Sunday when he announced that Syria could have "normal peaceful relations" with Israel under a peace agreement.

Mr. Clinton, at a joint news conference with Mr. Assad after more than five hours of talks in Geneva, welcomed

Syria's attitude to peace and said Israel should respond.

But Mr. Arafat said the PLO, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt should resume the coordination they established at the start of the U.S.-brokered peace conference in Madrid in 1991 in which negotiations were held on separate tracks.

"The new stage in the negotiations and particularly the difficulties we expect on all the tracks require the resumption of coordination between the five concerned Arab parties... in a way that there will not be negotiations (that are) easy and others difficult," Mr. Arafat said.

The "five" have not met since the PLO and Israel signed a declaration of principles in September for limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza and started negotiating on its implementation.

Syria and Lebanon reproached the PLO at the time of the secretly negotiated deal, accusing it of not keeping them informed and going off at a tangent. The PLO responded that its negotiations for the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were to start only within three years.

Syria softened its stance last week when it joined Gulf

(Continued on page 5)

Palestinians fear Syria-Israel peace

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Many Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories say they fear being left in the cold if Sunday's Clinton-Assad summit leads to a thaw in peace moves between Israel and Syria.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials, wary of offending Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, have publicly brimmed with optimism about his Geneva summit with U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Progress on any Middle East peace track is progress on all tracks, the officials said. But many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worry that Mr. Assad, who was outraged when the PLO negotiated a peace deal with Israel behind his back, may feel he no longer has to resist U.S. and Israeli pressure to make peace with the Jewish state.

"Many people are afraid Syria will make peace with Israel and then Israel will have absolutely no reason to make concessions to the Palestinians. We will be even more squeezed," said Jamal Mashal, a lawyer from Jericho.

"Since 1948, Israel has tried 'divide and rule' with the Arabs. Now they are close to achieving it," he said. For decades, Syria under Mr. Assad was Israel's arch-enemy, sticking doggedly to Arab nationalist ideology.

But there have also long been signs Mr. Assad is ready for peace at the right price. And the price may have dropped since, as he sees it, his old adversary PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat broke Arab ranks and signed a separate peace with Israel last year.

In Gaza last week, many Palestinians attributed delays

in Israeli-PLO talks on an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho to the summit.

They accused Israel of stalling to see if movement from Syria would strengthen its position with the Palestinians.

Publicly, Palestinian politicians of all hues were upbeat about the meeting, careful to keep on the right side of Mr. Assad who is now the key power broker in Middle East peace talks.

"We are not worried at all, to the contrary, we have always said real peace has to be comprehensive peace and that includes Syria. Any progress for Syria is progress for us," Saeb Erekat, a PLO negotiator, told Reuters.

Mahmoud Al Zohar, a spokesman for the Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas, was just as optimistic, telling Al Quds newspaper Syria would not yield to U.S. pressure to close down Syria-based Palestinian groups opposed to the Israel-PLO deal.

But newspaper editorials seemed as much aimed at persuading themselves as anybody else that they wily Assad would not be lured into deserting the Palestinian cause by Mr. Clinton and the prospect of fully entering the international community.

"Syria has not abandoned, at least in public, its (Arab) nationalist positions which means the Syrian regime under Hafez Al Assad cannot change its position from refusing to enter a separate peace into entering it," said Al Nahar newspaper.

But it added: "It is clear that even if Assad's rulers are not taking part today in Geneva, they are a basic part of these negotiations."

Attacks target Western missions in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Western embassies in the Iranian capital have been targeted in a wave of attacks in the past two weeks, blamed by the government on "anti-clergy elements" with links to the dissident group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq.

Simultaneous petrol bomb attacks were carried out against the French, British and Russian embassies at dawn on Jan. 5, and some structural damage was caused when shots were fired at the British embassy last Sunday.

On Thursday morning, two bombs exploded near Ferdowsi Square, not far from the embassies, injuring three passers-by and damaging shops. One of those injured died in hospital on Saturday.

Police have arrested 17 suspects in connection with the bombings and Sunday's attack, four of whom were released after preliminary interrogation, the official news agency IRNA said.

Arms and ammunition were seized from the suspects. Several of them confessed to links with the Iraq-based Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, and said they had received instructions to "carry out" sabotage activities throughout Tehran," it said.

The rebel group has denied involvement in any of the incidents.

Police on Saturday accused "fanatic and perverted elements" with links to the Mujahedeen of carrying out the bombings and Sunday's attack on the British embassy.

The "terrorists" had beliefs contrary to Islamic principles and the clerical spirit of the 1979 revolution, the statement said.

The Mujahedeen were also said to be behind grenade attacks against the French embassy and Air France office in Tehran just over two months ago as well as the hijacking of an oil ministry plane to Iraq in late November.

It was the first time the authorities had used the terms "fanatics" and "anti-clergy" to describe the attackers.

The officials imposed a new black-out on the embassy attacks up until Thursday, saying they would not begin until March because incorporation procedures may take that long.

Officials at Societe Financiere du Liban S.A.L. which will operate the market under central bank authority, say it will be ready by mid-February. SFL is setting up the computerised market floor on Riad Al Solh, Beirut's former banking street.

The exchange, designed by Andersen consulting who prepared the Riyadh stock exchange and others, is now being tested.

In the meantime, dealers report grey market demand but no supply since share allocations are not finalised. On Friday, five days after the issued closed, they quoted prices of 110-112 to 110-115 for the 100 shares but no deals.

Nabil Aoun, chairman of Fidis SAL investment house, said Mr. Hariri scored a big success in overcoming political opposition to the project. Opposition came chiefly from Beirut property owners angered by the expropriation of their rights and from Muslim clerics who denounced the share issue as a sinful usurpation.

"It is necessary to prevent the type of incidents which create doubts regarding the political stability and security of the Islamic Republic," it said on Wednesday.



A group of young Iraqis as part of a 10,000-strong demonstration held placards of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as they took to the streets in Baghdad early Monday to mark the third anniversary of the start of the Gulf war. (AFP photo)

'Moments of tension in Geneva'

GENEVA (R) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad treated U.S. President Bill Clinton Sunday to a five-hour taste of his chess-player style of diplomacy.

American officials wondered ahead of the talks how their boss would fare against the measured, precise Assad at a time when Mr. Clinton was tired from traversing six nations in eight days and concentrating mainly on policy towards Europe and Russia.

"I had heard a lot about President Assad's legendary stamina in these meetings," Mr. Clinton told reporters. "And when we called a break four hours and 20 minutes into our meeting, I can tell you that his reputation does not exceed the reality. He deserves every bit of it."

The meeting took place in a conference room at the heavily guarded Intercontinental Hotel on a rainy day in Geneva. For four hours and 26 minutes they talked with top aides present, staring across at each other with a long table separating them.

Then they moved to a side room and more comfortable chairs and talked for 50 minutes with only interpreters present.

One senior U.S. official described Mr. Clinton as "fascinated" to be meeting with this somewhat notorious character for the first time after exchanging phone calls and letters.

Mr. Clinton, the official said, established a level of rapport with Mr. Assad sufficient to "transact the business of this meeting."

"Assad was in good form," said one senior official. "He is a very interesting and challenging negotiator. He is very precise, very careful and very measured in what he says publicly."

Another official said there were "moments of tension" when Mr. Clinton pressed Mr. Assad on the U.S. charge that Syria supports groups the Americans regard as "terrorist."

Mr. Clinton specifically wanted Assad to pressure Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to turn over for trial two Libyans suspected in the December 1988 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland of the Pan Am jetliner that killed 270 passengers and people on the ground.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt pays 'repentant' militant \$6,000

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian Interior Ministry has paid a militant 20,000 pounds (\$6,000) for leaving a radical group involved in anti-government activities, police said Sunday. Adel Mohammad Abdul Baki, a key member of Al Shawayqiyyah which is based primarily in Faiyum south of Cairo, had decided to leave the organisation and declared he had repented by condemning its activities, they said. But police provided no details on the conditions surrounding his surrender or any possible charges that may be brought against him. Last month the ministry gave out rewards of 100,000 Egyptian pounds (\$30,000) to three people who provided police with information on a fundamentalist involved in a car bomb attack that almost killed Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Sedki on Nov. 25. The ministry recently announced it would pay 100,000 pounds to any person providing information leading to the arrest of a wanted fundamentalist.

Sudanese university vice-chancellors

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese President General Omar Hassan Al Bashir has sacked the vice-chancellors of the University of Khartoum and of the Sudan University for Science and Technology (UST), the official SUNA news agency reported. The report said Professor Mamoun Mohammad Ali Humaida had been dismissed from the University of Khartoum and Prof. Ahmad Al Amin Abdul Rahman from the UST. No reasons for the dismissals were given.

Abuses linked to 676 deaths in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Human rights abuses have reached an alarming level in Turkey, where at least 676 people were killed and 28 disappeared last year, the Turkish human rights association said Sunday. The association said 524 people were killed by unidentified attackers mostly in the east and southeast of the country. Among them was Kurdish Deputy Mehmet Sincar, who was gunned down in his hometown of Batman by suspected separatist guerrillas. Another 135 people were killed in what the association called "arbitrary executions" by the security forces. At least 17 people died under torture, the association said, calling for stronger measures to ensure that human rights abuses are not carried out in prison. The association also said 28 people disappeared after being remanded in custody by police while security forces often claimed they vanished after they had been freed. According to the group, 51 journalists are being held, four political parties have been closed down and two are being subjected to legal challenges and 260 books and 23 newspapers were banned.

Egypt backs Indonesia U.N. bid

JAKARTA (AFP) — Egypt backs Indonesia's bid for a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council and will consider supporting its bid to chair the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for another term, the official Antara news agency said Monday. Visiting Egyptian International Cooperation Minister Yousef Boutros Ghali, attending a three-day meeting of the Indonesia-Egypt joint commission, said Cairo thought highly of Indonesia's economic reforms and saw them as a viable model for other NAM members. Indonesia has chaired the 108-member NAM since September 1992. It's term is due to expire in 1995. Dr. Ghali, who is heading a delegation of 16 businessmen, said Egypt backed Jakarta's bid for non-permanent membership at the U.N. Security Council, as developing countries needed an advocate among international decision makers.

Iraqis ask Israel for political asylum

TEL AVIV (AP) — Two Iraqis crossed into Israel from Jordan over the weekend and asked the Jewish state for political asylum, Israeli media reported Monday. The daily Haaretz said the two men, aged 31 and 35, snuck into Israel from Jordan near the Dead Sea and surrendered themselves to soldiers in the area. The soldiers questioned the two men, then handed them over to police, who will ask the Beersheva magistrates court to extend their detention to allow further international. Haaretz said.

French MPs to work for lifting of Iraq embargo

BAGHDAD (AFP) — French lawmakers on Sunday ended talks in Baghdad, promising to work on their return for lifting U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq more than three years ago, the delegation said.

European Parliament Member and former French army Chief-of-Staff Jeanneau Lucace told AFP the delegation would strive for a lifting of the embargo slapped on Iraq four days after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

General Lucace, who described his talks with Iraqi officials as "very positive," said the delegation would "present several proposals reflecting the Iraqi viewpoint," but gave no details on the issues to be raised.

He said his team supported an easing of restrictions, notably on medical products. The delegation had decided to donate five tonnes of powdered milk to Iraqi infants, he added.

The French delegation, which left Monday for Amman, met Sunday with Prime Minister Ahmad Hussein Khudayar and Parliamentary Speaker Saadi Maldi Salih. A French official said Friday the visit was "a personal initiative and that it does not commit the French authorities" or represent a change in policy towards Iraq.

He added that France was still for Iraq's implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions on disarmament.

Franco-Iraqi ties were severed at Baghdad's initiative during the Gulf crisis to protest France's participation in the international coalition that ousted Iraq from Kuwait after seven months of occupation.

Iraqi newspapers reported Friday that Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz had discussed the possibility of restoring diplomatic ties between Baghdad and Paris with the lawmakers.

The delegation, which arrived Thursday, was led by Senator Serge Mathieu, head

of the Franco-Iraqi Friendship Association.

It also held talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahaf.

Kurds call for pressure

The Kurds of northern Iraq called Sunday on the United Nations to pressure Baghdad to resupply the Dohuk region with electricity after a six-month cut.

But Iraq said the U.N. embargo prevented it from buying spare parts to carry out repair work.

The Kurds, in a letter to U.N. representatives in Dohuk, called on the world body "to put serious pressure on the Iraqi regime to supply the governorate with electricity as soon as possible."

"If not we won't be able to prevent riots in a rather big dimension," they warned.

The spokesman for the local committee which sent the letter, Ramadan Issa, told AFP in the town of Zakho that more than 50 children had died last summer in one month alone because of the power cut.

But in Baghdad, the head of the electricity authority, said it was not to blame.

"The hydroelectric station at the Saddam Dam which supplies Dohuk with electricity was destroyed" during the 1991 Gulf war, said Jaafar Zia Jaafar, an adviser to President Saddam Hussein.

"But our order for spare parts was not accepted by the U.N. sanctions commission," he said, charging that Kurdish sabotage was also to blame.

The U.N. coordinator of humanitarian activities in Iraq, Mohammad Zejjari, said in October that the United Nations wanted to send an expert to inspect power plants in Iraq but he was not given a visa.

The north is cut off from the rest of Iraq since the Kurds took over the region after the war for Kuwait and set up their own administration, in defiance of Baghdad.

Rose Al Yousef publishes parts of 'Satanic Verses'

CAIRO (AP) — For the first time in Egypt, a weekly magazine published excerpts from Salman Rushdie's banned novel "The Satanic Verses" Sunday in a test of government plans to loosen controls over the arts.

The liberal magazine Rose Al Yousef also published parts of other banned works, including one by Nobel Literature Laureate Naguib Mahfouz, and an impassioned plea for eliminating religious control over what Egyptians read.

Culture Minister Farouk Hosni announced plans Friday to curb the powers of state censor Hamdi Sourouh by creating a panel of intellectuals — a higher committee of censorship — that would tell him what to do.

By giving intellectuals the final say in censorship policies for non-religious works, the government hopes to counter the growing power of Islamic leaders and a campaign of violence by Muslim extremists against secularists.

The Culture Ministry's censorship department screens non-religious works to ensure they conform with traditional norms and cause no political or security problems.

Still, books or artistic material that touch on Islam must be approved by Al Azhar, Islam's oldest, most prestigious theological institute.

Farouk Hosni is trying to outmanoeuvre the censor in a

battle between fundamentalists and the liberalists," said Mustafa Darwish, a movie critic, one-time censor and prospective member of the planned committee.

"The government is waging a battle on all fronts, security, political, economic and artistic," Mr. Darwish said.

Extremist-related violence has killed more than 280 people in two years, among them secularist writer Farag Foda. Militants have attacked movie houses and theatres, which they view as un-Islamic, and made known that journalists and intellectuals were at the top of their hit list.

"The Satanic Verses" is regarded as blasphemous by many Muslims, Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called on Muslims to kill Mr. Rushdie in 1989; he remains in hiding, with occasional public appearances.

Al Azhar has wielded enormous power over cultural life. It has banned books, influenced television advertisements and even health messages.

Two years ago, Al Azhar and Coptic Christian clergy-men joined forces to ban the mention of extramarital sex in a televised message on AIDS prevention.

Intellectuals agree that while rules on political expression have relaxed over the past decade, Al Azhar has been getting the last word on more and more material.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Chaton Des Oliviers
19:00 News in French
19:15 Le Cirque Mondial
20:30 News in Hebrew
20:40 News in Arabic
21:10 The Royal Family
21:10 Man And Machine
22:00 News in English
22:20 The Cape Rebel
23:10 Night Court

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:46 Dhuhr
14:26 Asr
16:29 Maghrib
18:21 Isha

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St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedeh, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrace Church Tel. 622366
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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Rami Zaitoun 888485
Dr. Nidal Al Dabab 827195
Dr. Bassam Karadash 759209
Dr. Yehya Abdel Salem 734072
Firm pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 6

Russia — a dangerous place to do business

By Jayson Carcione
Reuter

LONDON — It could be gangland Chicago or New York during the 1920s and 1930s, when mobsters, thugs and bosses controlled a vast criminal empire linked to protection rackets, gambling, prostitution and extortion.

But a new survey says this is Russia today.

Since the fall of communism, organised crime in Russia has grown at an alarming rate.

A report published by an international security firm, Control Risks Group, revealed that about 3,000 organised crime groups engaged in racketeering, extortion and kidnapping have surfaced in the former Soviet Union.

"The crime situation has deteriorated in the past two years. Unfortunately foreigners, including businesses, are targets of crime," said a Russian embassy spokesman in London.

"It is not absolutely safe to travel to Moscow and St. Petersburg," he added.

The control risks report also illustrated the fears of British business in Russia, which believes it to be the most dangerous place in the world to operate.

Of 100 top British executives polled, more than half saw Russia "as a difficult country to set up and run a business in."

The survey said: "Political uncertainty will continue in Russia throughout 1994, but escalating crime is the most pressing security problem for foreign business."

In the first six months of 1993 there were 7,000 reported crimes against foreigners, most of which were extortion demands. Perhaps not a high figure in some western cities, but in a country where communist law and order suppressed most criminal activity, it is uncommon.

"The real figures are likely to be much higher, though it is not clear how many of these extortions involved foreign business," said the report.

It added that serious crimes against foreigners are still rare in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but warned that foreign business "faces an increasing risk of extortion demands" in those former Soviet republics.

The British Foreign Office shares the concerns of overseas business in Russia. Its travel section has cautioned Britons to be on guard against crime and keep all expensive items out of sight.

"Legitimate business is being scared by the gangster-style of trading in Russia," said Christopher Grose, director of Control Risks Information Services, after the report was published.

"The lack of normal business practice is encouraging

extreme criminal activity and colossal official corruption," he said.

Political instability and economic uncertainty have added to the worsening crime situation.

"One reason why the right-wing extremists are attractive to the normal Russian is because they want the criminal element to go away," Mr. Grose said.

Ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who won a seat in Russia's parliament last month, told voters in an election television appearance: "We'll set up courts on the spot to shoot the leaders of criminal bands."

Despite rising crime, Mr. Grose, citing control risk group's yearly security report, believes Russia still offers a lot to businesses and that the situation will eventually improve.

"In terms of business practice, I think it will happen. But, he said, it is not going to be easy.

"Businesses have got to take careful steps. They have to make sure what they are facing out there."

"Companies must start building security funds. Risks can be managed," he said. He also warned against doing business with bogus Russian partners, who are sometimes a front for criminal organisations.

Russian crime is not an internal matter. It is estimated that more than 150 of these gangs operate internationally, with some forging links with the infamous Italian Mafia.

In August, a gang planning to demand a 10 million ransom tried to kidnap Swedish industrialist Peter Wallenberg from his home near Stockholm.

Last month, four gunmen, also seeking 10 million, kidnapped school students and then fled in a stolen army helicopter. The bizarre four-day journey ended in the arrest of the gang in southern Russia.

Many gangs have spread their tentacles to the Brighton Beach area of Brooklyn, an area of New York heavily populated by Russian immigrants.

Using Mafia-style tactics, they often demand protection money from shopkeepers and businesses.

Political activists see democratic process reversing

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Political activists charge that there is regress in democracy in Jordan for which the government is not the only party to blame.

"Democracy and (people's) rights are not going to be granted (to the people) by the regime, they should be taken (by force)," said Riad Nawayseh, a former deputy, at a roundtable entitled "The Future of Democracy in Jordan," held at the Professional Union's Complex Sunday.

"The 1952 constitution is better (than the present one) everything in the past was better," said Leith Shbeilat, also a former deputy.

To Salim Zou'bi, who unlike his colleagues ran for reelection but lost, the trend (going back on the path of democracy) is because the "enemies of democracy and the leaders of the martial law era are still in power and are scheming against democracy."

According to Mr. Zou'bi, a prominent lawyer who served in the 11th Parliament Judicial Committee the "signs" of regress and reversal of democracy are manifested in the procedures that started with the dissolution of Parliament, in August last year, and were followed by the introduction of the one-person, one-vote Election Law.

"This weird and odd law...I don't think that there were dire necessities to change the law in this manner without resorting to the legislative authority," Mr. Zou'bi said. "And besides, article 94 of the constitution before it was amended in 1958, stipulated that the Cabinet, with the approval of the King, can introduce temporary laws only in case of emergency. The emergency cases were confined to: natural catastrophes, war and the need to dispense emergency funds."

According to the former deputy, the other signs of this reversal are reflected in what he described as government interference in the recent elections and the bias of the local media in favour of the government against the opposition.

Adding to the list of "reversal phenomenon," Mr.

Shbeilat, another speaker at the three-hour roundtable which was organised by the Professional Union's Complex, who last year said he quit politics, described the capital punishment issued by the state Security Court on Monday against three persons charged with an assassination attempt on His Majesty King Hussein's life as "inhumane."

Referring to policies and practices of the ministries of finance, defence, and the interior, Mr. Shbeilat contended that "civil society institutions are still incapable of doing anything to (stay) the continuous violations of human rights."

"Democracy has tightened the fetters on the ideological, political and social freedoms," he said.

Mr. Shbeilat criticised what he saw as undemocratic approaches, refuting the "so-called democratic experiment."

"Calling it an experiment is a denial of the Constitution," he said.

To Ata Abu Rishbeh, another speaker at Sunday's

roundtable, and spokesperson for the Hizb Al Tahrir party, the idea of democracy is altogether in consistent with the Islamic Sharia. Based on the principle that "sovereignty is the right of the people," democracy is in contradiction with Islam which stipulates that sovereignty is for God solely; that is, laws and legislations should be extracted from the Koran and the Prophet's tradition and not "from the people themselves," Mr. Abu Rishbeh said.

Pointing to differences that exist between Islam's Majlis Al Shura (Shura Council) and Parliament, Mr. Abu Rishbeh said that the Shura Council's main task is confined to projecting its members' views about particular matters and does not have the same authorities that Parliament, in the democratic system, has. The Parliament's power to legislate and introduce amendments is in contradiction with Islam where laws are mainly derived from Sharia and disputable issues are generally referred to specialists in the subjects under discussion.

Discrimination among people, arbitrary dismissals of employees for political affiliations and interference in labour unions were listed by Azmi Khawajah, secretary general of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party, as other phenomena of reversal of democracy in the country. He charged that these practices have persisted even after the

introduction of democracy in 1989 and in some cases are becoming more severe as in the case of labour unions "which were more active in the pre-democracy era."

Senator Laila Sharaf, a former minister of information, supported Mr. Khawajah's argument but attributed this regression to the people's lack of enthusiasm and interest in enhancing the democratic process in the country.

"In the pre-democracy era, unions and organisations were more active and registered remarkable achievements," Mr. Sharaf said. "Before, bureaus would attend any meeting that the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Jordan called for... at present, quorum can be hardly achieved."

Ms. Sharaf, together with Mr. Zou'bi, put the blame partly on the Parliament itself, for lack of coordination and direct contact with the people's main concerns and partly on the people themselves, who, unaccustomed to democratic practices, seem incapable of living up to democratic principles.

about — and the potential for economic development and growth becomes almost unlimited.

"The climate of rising expectations spawned by the potential for peace demands that we act quickly and that we act effectively. The best hope for continued stability throughout this region is growing and widespread prosperity."

I believe Jordan can and will be an increasingly important commercial partner of the United States. I believe we can create a relationship that will generate jobs and prosperity in

both of our nations. And I believe our work this week will bring peace and stability to a region too long torn by the tragedies of war and poverty."

Mr. Brown, a leading figure in the American civil rights movement and a close associate of the late Martin Luther King, addressed a gathering organised by the World Affairs Council later Monday marking the birthday of Dr. King.

He also attended a meeting with businessmen organised by the Jordan Businessmen's Association before leaving for Israel.

Following are excerpts from Mr. Brown's arrival comments:

"Jordan's highly educated population, its strategic location, its progressive leadership all point to a nation poised for increased prosperity. When we add to this equation the possibility for lasting peace — which Jordan has helped to bring

Brown optimistic over economic ties

(Continued from page 1)

Crown Prince Hassan told Jordan Television after his talks with Mr. Brown that "clearly this is an issue that has to be raised in the context of peace-making" and noted that the idea of free trade in the Middle East was reviewed at length at a meeting in London last week.

The U.S. secretary of commerce said he "indicated strongly and unequivocally that (Washington) will be very supportive of Jordan" in the Kingdom's bid to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Asked whether there was any move to make capital

available for possible Jordanian-American joint ventures, he said: "We're trying to put together American businessmen and women who are interested in joint venture opportunities, not only here in Jordan but also in the West Bank and Gaza and other parts of this region of the world."

Mr. Brown described anxiety to protect intellectual property rights — computer software, music and films etc. — against unauthorised commercialisation as a major concern of the U.S. and such practices were an impediment to closer commercial cooperation.

However, he said that during his talks in Saudi Arabia, where he began his Middle East visit Saturday, and in Jordan he found "an increased sensitivity on that issue and the importance the U.S. attaches to that issue."

"The United States happens

tracks, it will yield a comprehensive settlement based on land in return for peace and will lead to the formation of a Syrian-American mechanism to tackle all the issues between the two parties."

Some Arab diplomats also said that while peace between Syria and Israel might lead to both countries' troops leaving Lebanon, that country would probably remain under Damascus' political tutelage.

A flurry of statements praising the summit came from pro-Syrian Lebanese officials, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri "saluted" Mr. Assad for discussing with Mr. Clinton an Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon.

U.S. expects Israel-Syria move

(Continued from page 1)

based on U.N. resolutions and the principle of a land-for-peace deal as specified at the start of Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid in 1991.

"The historic summit has given a new impetus and injected a new spirit into the stalled peace talks on the basis of the Madrid equation," the newspaper said.

Al Thawra noted that the summit proved that Syria is viewed by Washington as a key and decisive player in achieving peace in the region.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, speaking from Geneva, said: "This summit will revive the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese

JORDAN WELFARE LOTTERY

Special Issue No. 1/1994

Drawing of January 17, 1994

Winning Tickets

Holder of ticket No. 60059 B Wins JD 60,000	Ten consolation prizes totalling JD 4,000 each wins JD 400 60050 60049 60159 61059 70059 60058 60048 60959 69059 50059
Holder of ticket No. 60059 A Wins JD 25,000	Ten consolation prizes totalling JD 3,000 each wins JD 300 60050 60049 60159 61059 70059 60058 60048 60959 69059 50059
Holder of ticket No. 72765 A B Wins JD 12,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 1,000 each wins JD 100 72766 72775 72865 73765 02765 72764 72755 72665 71765 62765
Holder of ticket No. 19921 A B Wins JD 10,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 1,000 each wins JD 100 19922 19931 19021 18921 29921 19920 19911 19821 10921 09921
Holder of ticket No. 74836 A B Wins JD 7,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 2,000 each wins JD 100 74837 74846 74936 75836 04836 74835 74826 74736 73836 64836
Holder of ticket No. 39329 A B Wins JD 5,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 1,400 each wins JD 80 39320 39339 39429 30329 49329 39328 39319 39229 38329 29329
Holder of ticket No. 06952 A B Wins JD 4,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 1,400 each wins JD 70 06953 06962 06052 07952 16952 06951 06942 04852 05952 76952
Holder of ticket No. 20281 A B Wins JD 2,500	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 1,200 each wins JD 60 20282 20291 20381 21281 30281 20280 20271 20181 29281 10281
Holder of ticket No. 20261 A B Wins JD 2,000	Twenty consolation prizes totalling JD 400 each wins JD 30 20262 20271 20361 21261 30261 20260 20251 20161 29261 10261

Ticket numbers 70920 66111 68148 A B	Win JD 1,000 each
Ticket numbers 34970 67841 A B	Win JD 500 each

TICKETS ENDING WITH

8631 A B Win JD 250 each	8536 A B Win JD 100 each
027 A B Win JD 50 each	83 A B Win JD 15 each
1 One A B Win JD 5 each	

COVER PRIZES FOR THE LOTTERY SELLERS

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Winners of the grand prizes in the special issue number 24 of January 2, 1994

 Farah Mohammed Amman Branch Half First Grand Prize A JD 40,000	 Mohamed Al-Sayid Amman Branch Half First Grand Prize B JD 40,000	 Zuhair Al-Sayid Amman Branch Half First Grand Prize A JD 15,000	 Faisal Abu Salem Irbid Branch Half First Grand Prize A JD 15,000	 Al-Murad Al-Murad Amman Branch Half Second Prize A JD 7,500	 Mohamed Omran Amman Branch Half Second Prize A JD 7,500
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Les Sax

in a classical Jazz concert on Friday, January 21st, 1994 in the AL-WAHA Ballroom at the Amman Marriott Hotel at 8:00 p.m. A Cocktail reception will be held after the show.

Tickets for J.D. 5,000

Tickets are sold at Amman Marriott Hotel, Air France, French Cultural Centre.



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LE MONDE EN UN SEUL VOYAGE

CENTRE CULTUREL FRANCAIS

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مدير مصنع في إيطاليا

شركة صناعية رائدة في إيطاليا تطلب مدير بالمؤهلات التالية:

- خريج إحدى الجامعات العالمية المعترف بها بدرجة بكالوريوس في إدارة الأعمال أو الهندسة الصناعية.
- خبرة في مجال إدارة المصانع لا تقل عن 5 سنوات.
- أو خبرة في الإدارة العامة لا تقل عن 7 سنوات.
- إتقان للغة الإنجليزية.
- يفضل الامتلاك باللغة الإيطالية.
- يفضل من يحمل إحدى جنسيات دول السوق الأوروبية المشتركة.

ترسل السيرة الذاتية مرفقة بصورة عن الشهادات العلمية والمهنية وصورة شخصية على العنوان التالي:-

ص.ب. ١٤١٢٢٠ بيدر وادي السير

السيد المدير العام

Majali

(Continued from page 1)

Dr. Majali urged Arab states to join Western creditors in rescheduling its debts to revive the economy, rocked by foreign debt and a sharp decline in aid.

Dr. Majali said the domestic economy had started to improve since Jordan launched reforms.

"We have overcome the most difficult stages and Jordan hopes sisterly countries (Arabs) will show understanding as was done by friendly countries, which have rescheduled our debts," he said.

Dr. Majali did not name the Arab creditors nor give figures.

According to official Arab figures, Jordan received around \$2.1 billion of \$19.5 billion extended by Gulf states in loans and grants in the five years before the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

It has also received more than 10 per cent of the total Arab aid of nearly \$100 billion provided between 1970 and 1992.

PLO

(Continued from page 1)

states and Egypt in a declaration which described the Israeli-PLO accord as a first step on the path of peace.

There had been no consultations between the PLO and Damascus before the Geneva summit, and so far, no briefing has been planned after it PLO officials said.

Africans blaming West for rising prices

ABIDJAN (R) — From the street salesman to the government newspaper the mood in Ivory Coast at the weekend was one of growing resentment towards foreigners. They are being blamed for the devaluation of the CFA franc and subsequent price rises throughout the 14 states where it is used.

"One European woman asking a roadside peddler why his goods had doubled in price received a belligerent answer. 'Because of devaluation, because of you,' he snapped. 'The semi-official Ivorian daily's weekend edition carried a savage caricature of a leering International Monetary Fund (IMF) official drowning a screaming head-shaped as African'."

"Be quiet it's for your own good," was the caption. Another cartoon in the same paper showed a cigar-smoking IMF executive preparing a giant syringe to inject a dose of devaluation into a battered and trembling Africa. The bitterness has several origins. Newspapers, analysts and several politicians in the region say France and the Washington-based IMF and World Bank forced devaluation upon the 13 Central and West African states and the Indian Ocean Comoros Islands which make up the CFA franc zone.

The price-rises that immediately followed Wednesday's devaluation — 50 per cent in the mainland states and

33 per cent in the comoros — caused bitterness toward shopkeepers seen as profiting from wage-earners' pain.

West Africa's commercial life is dominated by Lebanese and Indian businessmen and they are increasingly resented by Africans as unemployment rises and government austerity programmes bite.

"I shall be looking over my shoulder for a while. People tell me 'we know you've made money out of this but we'll see you suffer too,'" a Lebanese businessman told Reuters.

Ivory Coast's government closed branches of the foreign-owned Prismo supermarket chain Friday until further notice. State television said the stores were shut because of "excessive price increases."

Neighbouring Burkina Faso closed three businesses for the same reason, ordering them to keep paying wages while shut.

In Abidjan, several shops ceased trading voluntarily, preferring to wait until pricing policy and changes to tax and import regulations were clarified.

"I have merchandise of all sorts and of different origins and I can't tell which of them I am allowed to mark up and which I must keep at the old price," one trader said.

"I prefer to close and wait until things become more clear," he added.

The Ivory Coast government itself added to confusion. On Wednesday it published a list of goods and services it said were subject to a three-month price freeze and two days later

raised the price of two of the items on the list, fuel and rice.

An official of ELF Cote d'Ivoire, a subsidiary of France's ELF-Aquitaine, said the company would implement the 15 per cent increase in petrol prices and 10 per cent rise in diesel from midnight Sunday.

France ruled most of the CFA zone states before independence and had supported the CFA franc at a parity of 50 to one French franc since 1948.

Its decision last year to back devaluation left the zone with little choice if it wanted continued French financial backing.

"Without doubt, we French are not well-loved in this part of the world right now," an expatriate engineer said.

Oil prices limit Iran's capacity expansion plans

MANAMA (R) — Iran plans eventually to expand its oil production capacity significantly with foreign help but said Monday that weak prices did not justify capacity expansions at the moment.

"The outlook for crude oil prices and demand in the future do not justify further expansions for us right now," Mustapha Khoei, representing Iranian Oil Minister Gholamreza Agazadeh, told a Middle East oil and gas conference.

He confirmed later that he was referring to a reluctance for now to expand beyond current rather than targeted capacity.

But he said the government's National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC), of which he is director for offshore production, was proposing that nearly \$30 billion be invested in the oil and gas sector in the second five-year plan beginning on March 26.

The objective is reaching a crude oil production capacity of five million barrels per day (b/d) or 4.5 million b/d on a sustainable basis and preserving that level in the next five years," he said.

The proposals are subject to parliamentary approval.

Mr. Khoei, who is also managing director of NIOC's Iranian Offshore Oil Co., said Iran now had capacity of 4.2 million b/d — 3.8 million onshore and 400,000 offshore.

He did not specify whether this was sustainable or only a level that could be attained for short periods.

Most analysts doubt that Iran has sustainable capacity much over 3.8 million and say the shortage of foreign exchange, exacerbated by weak prices, is squeezing oil sector operations.

He said Iran was producing at the 3.6 million b/d quota set by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The NIOC proposal is to invest \$16.6 billion of government funds on oil and a further \$9 billion in the oil sector for foreign resources. In the form of foreign credit. A further \$3.8 billion of government funds would be spent on the gas sector.

Mr. Khoei said the Iranian constitution hindered NIOC from granting production sharing on equity agreements.

China, U.S. reach textile agreement

BEIJING (R) — China and the United States pulled back from the brink of a punishing trade war Monday, agreeing to a new textile pact that will crack down on illegal quotas-busting by Chinese firms, officials said.

Wu Yi, head of China's ministry of foreign trade and economic cooperation (MOFTEC), hailed the agreement as a breakthrough after months of fruitless talks that culminated this month with a U.S. threat to slash Chinese textile quotas by up to 35 per cent.

"The strengthening of our cooperation will not only help to strengthen our bilateral economic and trade relations but also promote peace and world development," Mr. Wu told chief U.S. negotiator Jennifer Hillman before the pact was signed.

"We should join hands on cracking down on middlemen and hope for close cooperation to implement the agreement," Mr. Wu said.

Ms. Hillman said she was also pleased to announce the agreement, which she called "fair and equitable for both sides."

The pact, covering billions of dollars in Chinese exports, came at a key moment in Sino-U.S. relations as Washington gears up for its annual review of China's most favoured nation (MFN) preferential trade status in June.

The memorandum of understanding, signed by Ms. Hillman and MOFTEC Vice Minister Shi Guangsheng, extends a bilateral textile trade regime for a further three years. The existing pact expired on Dec. 31.

The row revolved around U.S. accusations that Beijing allowed some \$2 billion worth

of Chinese textiles to slip into the United States bearing false third-country labels, thus evading quotas.

Washington, which says China sold some \$7.3 billion in textiles to the United States last year, demanded Beijing take stronger action to stop the transshipments or risk losing a major chunk of its biggest overseas textile market.

The pact was agreed only after a half-raising final day of negotiation that saw both sides repeatedly postpone hopes for a quick compromise. The U.S. quota cuts were due to come into effect Monday.

China, which had vowed to retaliate for any unilateral U.S. action, said the threatened cuts would have cost its textile industry some \$1.2 billion and thrown 300,000 Chinese out of work.

Vice Minister Shi, speaking to Chinese reporters after the agreement was announced, said the sides agreed to compromise while working together to police transshipments.

China's main gesture was to agree that if a Chinese firm is proven to be evading quotas by using illegal transshipments, Beijing may agree on a case-by-case basis to accept a tighter quota cut.

"China has agreed to accept a quota reduction of no more than three times the amount of textiles conclusively proven to have been illegally transhipped," the official news agency Xinhua said.

The United States, for its part, agreed not to demand the right to make unilateral inspections of Chinese firms but to do so only as part of Chinese investigations into quota-busting, Mr. Shi said.

Algeria wants to broaden business links with Asia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Algeria has unveiled plans to increase business links with Asia after signing an agreement with Malaysia to house the African country's first palm oil refinery.

"This agreement with Malaysia is the first venture with Asian countries as part of efforts to end European dominance of our economy," Algerian government consultant Ali Benouari said after the pact to set up the \$28 million refinery project was inked here.

"The refinery, a joint venture between Malaysian company Jasinova SDN BHD and Algerian firm Arcomex d'Algerie S.A., would lead to substitution of palm oil on the Algerian market for rapeseed oil presently purchased from Europe," Arcomex Chairman Nacer Ziani said.

Palm oil, of which Malaysia is the world's largest producer, presently holds only 10 per cent of the 400,000-tonne vegetable oil market in Algeria, Mr. Nacer said.

"We are targeting palm oil to capture about 50 per cent of the Algerian market within five years," Jasinova's Chairman Victor Ngu said, adding that the refinery venture was feasible despite Algeria's political instability.

Mr. Ali, a former Algerian treasury minister, said Algeria wanted to set up more business joint ventures with Asians, as it had become too dependent on Europe, which "controls nearly two-thirds of our foreign trade."

"Algerians are beginning to find out it is cheaper to trade and invest with Asia," said Mr. Ali, who is helping the government liberalise Algeria's tightly-controlled businesses.

Mr. Ali said Asian investors could set up industries in the upcoming free trade area encompassing Algeria and four other countries — Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Mauritania — to tap markets in Europe and the Middle East.

Rouble hits new low on fears economic reforms have stalled

MOSCOW (R) — The rouble fell victim to Russia's deepening political crisis Monday, tumbling 3.5 per cent to a record low of 1,402 to the dollar on fears that economic reforms would grind to a halt.

Dealers said the currency, which has already fallen 12 per cent this year, would continue its steep decline. Banks were alarmed by the weekend departure of reform chief Yegor Gaidar.

"We have witnessed the collapse of the Russian economy," said Alexander Bessmertny, trader at Kubanbank.

Vitaly Shmelyov, vice-president of Chasprombank, said the rouble was likely to fall to 1,500 to the dollar this month.

"The fall is due to Gaidar's departure," Gaidar leaves the central bank will have more freedom in its actions and that's why banks are worried now," he said.

Other dealers said the currency could fall even further than that. Some did not rule out a rate of 2,000 roubles per dollar if the economy descends into turmoil.

Mr. Gaidar, the main architect of Russia's economic reforms, said he would not accept an invitation to serve as first deputy prime minister in the new government of President Boris Yeltsin. He complained that decisions were being taken behind his back.

And dealers said they expected Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov to follow Mr. Gaidar into opposition.

"Gaidar is a decent man, he cannot work in a government which squanders money stupidly. I do not think Yeltsin

will persuade him to stay," said Alexander Chernykh, dealer with Kredit Moskva. "I reckon Fyodorov will leave as well."

Mr. Gaidar and Mr. Fyodorov have clashed on many occasions with more conservative Russian officials, including central bank head Viktor Gerashchenko, an advocate of centralised credits and support for industry, and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Chernomyrdin has said clearly that shock therapy is over, which means the end of tough monetary policy," Mr. Chernykh added. "The government has no other concept and in three months the state will go bankrupt. The only protection is converting assets into dollars."

The rouble's fall — the currency tumbled to 1,425 to the dollar on the smaller St. Petersburg Exchange — and Mr. Gaidar's departure came as economic reforms were showing early signs of bearing fruit.

The rouble had moved only slowly against the dollar in the second half of last year and monthly inflation fell to a 1993 low of 12 per cent in December.

Dealers said the lower inflation rate was due to tighter monetary policy and strict spending controls.

But the course of economic policy was thrown into doubt when voters delivered a stinging rebuff to Mr. Gaidar's reformist Russia's Choice in parliamentary polls on Dec. 12.

In a surprise result, weary voters elected a parliament where feuding reformers are outnumbered by communists, conservative agrarians and ex-

treme nationalists.

Mr. Yeltsin promised to keep reforms on track, but his promises, including one to visiting President Bill Clinton "to develop and deepen reforms, with stronger social orientation" took on a hollow ring after Mr. Chernomyrdin called for a slower approach.

Economists said new policies could include higher subsidies, increased government spending and new credit emissions from the central bank.

The three could drive inflation up again and make a mockery of the anti-inflation policies successfully pursued in the second half of last year.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen castigated Mr. Gerashchenko last week for his go-slow approach to reform, saying it failed to address the country's economic woes.

"You have to move ahead with reforms," Mr. Bentsen told reporters. "There are dangers in going too slowly."

The treasury secretary sharply criticised Mr. Gerashchenko's support for continued credits to Russia's inefficient, state-owned enterprises, saying such a policy fuelled inflation and encouraged Russian investors to shift money out of the country.

Mr. Bentsen used the same put-down line on Mr. Gerashchenko that he employed on Dan Quayle in their 1988 election campaign debate after the former vice president compared himself with the late John Kennedy.

"I know Alan Greenspan," Mr. Bentsen said, referring to the widely respected chairman of the Federal Reserve, the

U.S. central bank. "Alan Greenspan is a friend of mine. Viktor Gerashchenko is not Alan Greenspan."

Russian reformers have made no secret of their desire to oust Mr. Gerashchenko from his post as central bank chief. Mr. Fyodorov has publicly said he would like the job.

A senior U.S. Treasury Department official said it was unlikely, however, that Mr. Fyodorov would get the post.

While it was possible that Mr. Gerashchenko might be forced out in a cabinet reshuffle expected this week, the official called the central bank governor a "survivor."

Mr. Gerashchenko, who has been called the world's worst central banker by Harvard University professor and Yeltsin adviser Jeffrey Sachs, freely admits his aversion to orthodox macro-and micro-economics and even jokes about it.

"I don't understand all this stuff about micros and macros," he quipped at the opening of the Moscow banking office of U.S.-headquartered Citicorp.

He has placed greater emphasis in policy on supporting Russia's struggling industries and bringing about a recovery in output than meeting rigorous monetary targets.

While Mr. Gerashchenko's position as central bank chief is important for the future pace of Russia's reforms, its significance has diminished recently following the formation last year of a joint committee between the bank and the finance ministry to control the flow of credit.

Indian diamond industry seen outpacing rivals

BOMBAY (R) — India's exports of gems and jewellery are forecast to surge by 29 per cent in the current financial year to \$3.9 billion, with the country set to become a major supplier to the U.S. industry sources have said.

India has already become

the world's largest cutter of rough diamonds and is now focusing on the manufacture of diamond jewellery.

"India has the potential to supplant both Thailand and Hong Kong as the major supplier of diamond jewellery into the United States," said

Michael Mitchell, general manager for rough diamond sales with Australia's Argyle Diamonds.

Argyle, a joint venture between CRA Ltd and Ashton Mining Ltd. of Australia is the world's largest diamond producer. It announced the forma-

tion of an Indo-Argyle Diamond Council to promote the sale of Indian diamond jewellery in the United States.

"Argyle believes that the Indian diamond jewellery industry will become the next major jewellery manufacturing centre," said Andrew Wagstaff,

Argyle's manager for customer services.

The U.S. jewellery market was worth \$36.5 billion in 1993, of which 45 per cent comprises diamond jewellery, according to experts at a seminar in Bombay on the diamond industry in the U.S. market.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY JANUARY 18, 1994

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Think more in terms of picking up long-term arrangements with friends and relatives; less about temporary matters as we experience the triple Moon square to Neptune, Uranus and Mars.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You are highly inspired now how to attain your greatest aspirations with relative ease. Follow through and you will have success and happiness.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Talk over with kin how to have greater security, happiness. Help them to help themselves. Be more progressive, get rid of whatever is old-fashioned.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get in touch with associates in every sphere of your existence and talk over ideas and plans for the future. Be more successful.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Much can be accomplished now, so be sure to work diligently and also in full cooperation with co-workers. Exchange good ideas.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This can be a wonderful happy day for you. Commercialise on special talents, see the right people that can help you towards your success.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be most devoted and loyal to close ties now and do what they desire of you, so that you impress upon them that they come first with you.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Your finest benefits come from progressive and dynamic friends today. Be sure to approach them for ideas and cooperation you need.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Tend strictly to money-making projects today and be particularly cooperative with associates who are practical. Also, impress higher-ups with your fine business acumen.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) An ideal day to look into new systems and outlets, make fine contacts that will mean greater prosperity for you in the early future.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A particularly fine day for investigations that will give you the date you need at this time. Be secretive, think big. Get out to cultural pursuits in the evening.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get into friendly circles and those who are truly loyal now so that you get good advice and ideas how to get along better with partners, be more successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you get business affairs in order and get credit rating higher, a big win will then give you the backing you need at this time.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

Peanuts

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrillon

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

1. RINDE
2. SHAWS
3. THRIDE
4. BRISCE

Answer: "RINDE, SHAWS, THRIDE, BRISCE"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: HABIT, MANGY, BOLERO, RELISH
Answer: What they called the horses with adjoining stalls — NEIGH-BORS

Andy Capp

Mutt'n' Jeff

THE Daily Crossword by Joan O. Berberich

ACROSS

1. Rarely on TV
5. Kinky
9. Frequently
14. River to the coast
15. Spare
16. Scandinavian
17. Musical band
18. Maltres
19. Whimpy's Muse
20. Sea slug
21. Cap
22. Word of horse
23. Star
24. Of the land
25. Secreted
26. June or zone
29. Bait
30. Hair
31. Clasp
32. Hair
33. Hong Kong
34. Cup part two
35. More strongly
36. English
37. Pink
38. Bunch
39. Try — things
40. A time
41. Cat's car
42. Sea
43. Part three
44. New year
45. Sea
46. Sea
47. Sea
48. Sea
49. Sea
50. Sea
51. Sea
52. Sea
53. Sea
54. Sea
55. Sea
56. Sea
57. Sea
58. Sea
59. Sea
60. Sea

DOWN

2. Try — things
3. A time
4. Cat's car
5. Sea
6. Sea
7. Sea
8. Sea
9. Sea
10. Sea
11. Sea
12. Sea
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58. Sea
59. Sea
60. Sea

Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:

1. BANG 2. BANG 3. BANG 4. BANG 5. BANG 6. BANG 7. BANG 8. BANG 9. BANG 10. BANG 11. BANG 12. BANG 13. BANG 14. BANG 15. BANG 16. BANG 17. BANG 18. BANG 19. BANG 20. BANG 21. BANG 22. BANG 23. BANG 24. BANG 25. BANG 26. BANG 27. BANG 28. BANG 29. BANG 30. BANG 31. BANG 32. BANG 33. BANG 34. BANG 35. BANG 36. BANG 37. BANG 38. BANG 39. BANG 40. BANG 41. BANG 42. BANG 43. BANG 44. BANG 45. BANG 46. BANG 47. BANG 48. BANG 49. BANG 50. BANG 51. BANG 52. BANG 53. BANG 54. BANG 55. BANG 56. BANG 57. BANG 58. BANG 59. BANG 60. BANG

JOHANNESBURG. South Africa (AP) — Zulu supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) killed at least two people Monday and dragged township commuters from cars and taxis to enforce a strike call, police and witnesses said.

Unconfirmed reports said up to seven people died in beatings, shootings and stabbings in townships around Johannesburg as Zulus were called upon to skip work and greet their king in Pretoria.

King. About 15,000 Zulus, many dressed in tribal costumes and brandishing traditional weapons such as clubs and spears, gathered outside the government buildings in Pretoria. Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini and Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthezi began talks in the afternoon with President F. W. de Klerk to discuss Zulu demands for sovereignty after April elections.

Inkatha spokeswoman Suzanne Vos denied allegations of intimidation, calling them part of a "vicious, anti-Inkatha campaign" waged by Nelson Mandela's rival African National Congress (ANC).

But Zwelithini said the ANC

supporter claimed he was forced to hide in a train toilet more than an hour to escape rampaging Inkatha supporters.

"I realised 'I'm going to die,'" David Sibeko said after leaving the train in Pretoria. Sibeko, 33, said he was travelling from Soweto, outside Johannesburg, to work in the city. But he said he stayed on the train, cowering on the toilet floor, all the way to Pretoria 60 kilometres (40 miles) away to avoid being attacked.

"They tried to push me (toilet) door. I put my back against the door, because I was afraid. Opening the door, it was the end of my days," he said.

Despite being officially non-partisan, King Zwelithini is a crucial figure in Inkatha's political fight against ANC domination of the Zulu homeland of KwaZulu. Inkatha is dominated by Zulus, and King Zwelithini frequently shares the podium with Mr. Buthelezi at rallies.

An unidentified man, stabbed in the face, flees into alleys in Alexander, a shanty town north of Johannesburg as Zulus clash with township residents trying to get to work (APF photo)

business district, frightening away street vendors for the day.

In Pretoria, several pro-apartheid whites who oppose the ANC gathered to support the Zulus. Dennis Forbes, a member of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, said his party and Inkatha "are the only right guys, because they... just want their own countries. They don't want to share with Mandela."

Police Lt. Deon Peens said two men were beaten to death in the townships of Actonville and Daveyton, east of Johannesburg, in a "campaign of intimidation" aimed at forcing Zulus to return to Pretoria.

The bodies of five people with bullet wounds were found in Vosloorus, south of Johannesburg, and police were investigating whether the murders were related to the Zulu strike.

LUANDA (R) — Angolan government troops repulsed UNITA rebel attacks around the besieged northern city of Malange, killing more than 50 guerrillas, state radio said Monday.

The fighting took place as the two sides prepared to resume talks in the Zambian capital Lusaka on settling nearly two decades of civil war.

Mal. is one of several government-held cities in the interior under siege by Jonas Savimbi's rebel army.

State radio said 52 guerrillas were killed in a series of clashes around the city. One guerrilla was captured and weapons, including 43 machineguns, were seized, it said.

The report could not be independently confirmed.

Last week Savimbi

threatened to retaliate for what he said were fresh government attacks and hinted he might withdraw from the peace negotiations which began in November.

UNITA, which faces U.N. sanctions after being branded the aggressor in the war, Sunday said the government had just acquired \$160 million worth of weapons and military equipment.

It said this proved government insincerity towards the peace effort.

The two sides reportedly reached a ceasefire agreement last month but it will not take effect until political issues, notably UNITA demands for a role in government, are sorted out.

The state newspaper *Jornal De Angola* said Monday the two negotiation teams in Washington had agreed to resume

ka would continue discussing a proposed national police force.

General principles of the force were resolved but they had reached an impasse on details, the newspaper said.

These include UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) demands for the dismantling of a government paramilitary police force known locally as "the ninjas."

Civil war first broke out in Angola on independence from Portugal in 1975. A peace accord in 1991 briefly halted the conflict but fighting resumed after Savimbi lost elections in September 1992 and returned to the bush.

Tens of thousands of people died as a result of the war last year, many of them civilians who were killed by disease or starvation.

TOKYO (AFP)—Japan's fragile ruling coalition got wide support at a public hearing Monday for its political reform legislation, only two days before it faces a vote on the anti-corruption measures it has pledged to implement.

All indications are that the vote will be very close. Even Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, who has staked his political future on their approval, admits the outcome is difficult to predict.

At Monday's public hearing one witness, recommended by the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which has fought passage of the bill, spoke in favour of the bills but said there was room for amendment.

"The bills should be passed at the current session of parliament by any means," Komazawa University Professor Osamu Nishi told the hearing. "If they collapse, it will brighten

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine (R) A Russian nationalist intent on splitting the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine convincingly won the first round of local presidential elections Monday but Kiev denounced the poll as illegal.

Returns from all but two of 66 polling stations in Crimea gave Communist lawyer Yuri Meshkov 40 per cent of the vote, well ahead of his rivals but short of the 50 per cent needed to win outright.

His closest rival, Nikolai Bagrov — the only one of the six candidates who wants Crimea to remain in Ukraine — was well behind on 20 per cent. The two front-runners will contest a second round of voting in two weeks.

Mr. Meshkov wants to return Crimea to Russian rule, saying living conditions have plummeted since Ukraine gained independence in 1991.

The shock outcome threatened the former Soviet republic's unity and could usher in significantly worse relations with Russia.

Politicians in Ukraine were predictably outraged. A senior political adviser to President Leonid Kravchuk denounced the poll and said Kiev would

soon decide how to react.

These presidential elections are illegal because there is no post of Crimean president in the Ukrainian constitution," Mykola Mykhalychenko said by telephone.

"Today we expect to adopt a strategic decision about Crimea," he said, but gave no further details.

Mr. Kravchuk could decide to impose direct presidential rule over the peninsula but this would undoubtedly inflame tensions with Russia, where ultra-nationalists made a strong showing in last month's parliamentary elections.

The autonomy and this post are illegal aims and this is dividing Ukraine. These results are proof of pro-Russian and pro-imperialist forces in Crimea," fumed leading opposition member Vyacheslav Chornovil.

But Mykola Shurga, a Communist deputy who is also head of the Parliamentary Commission on State Sovereignty and Relations Between Nationalities, took a calmer line.

"We have to respect this choice, for the majority of people in Crimea voted this way. I can't comment on this pessimistically," he said.

"We are not extremists. We stand for common sense in Crimea," Vladimir Kalichnikov, one of Mr. Meshkov's top organisers, told journalists.

Local reporters said the vote reflected anger and despair at collapsing living standards.

They also said Mr. Bagrov, the Crimean parliament chairman who had carried Kiev's hopes in the poll, had run a badly-organised campaign.

Mr. Meshkov has pledged to stage a referendum on the status of Crimea on March 27, the day of Ukraine's elections.

He also promised to establish Crimean citizenship, send a delegation to Moscow to discuss economic relations and take measures to stabilise the local economy and help pensioners.

Crimea has been one of the focal points of discord with Russia in the two years since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russia's parliament last July claimed the Black Sea Fleet headquarters of Sevastopol as Russian territory, enraging even moderate Ukrainians and prompting a censure motion from the United Nations Security Council.

public mistrust in politics. It is important to find compromises."

Prof. Nishi was one of the six witnesses, including academics and local administrators, who spoke at the hearing while the seven-party coalition held a meeting on the vote, expected Wednesday in the upper house.

But Mr. Hosokawa, who has threatened to resign if the bills do not get approved, said there were few grounds for optimism.

"I am barely estimating the vote count. Indeed, it is difficult to estimate it," he said. Mr. Hosokawa may be forced to resign or dissolve the lower house for fresh elections if the bills failed before the end of the parliament session on Jan. 29.

On Wednesday, the bills will be first put to the vote in the Upper House Committee on Political Reform and then to the 252-seat full chamber in which the coalition has 131 seats.

The LDP, which lost its 34-

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodia's Maoist Khmer Rouge has rejected the demobilisation of its guerrilla forces, branding a government peace offer as nothing more than a trap to destroy the organisation.

The move opens the way for both sides to use the current dry season to settle their differences on the battlefield.

In a statement dated Jan. 15 but released Monday, nominal chief Kieu Samphan formally rejected a key part of the peace plan — the demobilisation of the Khmer Rouge military machine and its eventual integration into the country's army.

"Such activity cannot achieve real national reconciliation because it is not a real unification of national forces but an attempt to catch and put the DK Party (Democratic Kampuchea or Khmer Rouge) in an iron cage which the 'yuon' Communists have arranged since its aggression in Cambodia. By doing this the DK Party will commit suicide," said Mr. Kieu Samphan.

The statement was noteworthy for its abusive tone towards the government's main coalition partner, the Cambodian Peoples' Party, formerly the Vietnamese-installed government referred to by the Khmer Rouge as "Yuan Communists."

"Yuan" is a pejorative term used by Cambodians to describe Vietnamese.

The peace offer, originally conceived by Cambodian head of state King Norodom Sihanouk, requires the Khmer Rouge to accept a general ceasefire, open up its zones of control including Preah Vihear Temple and gem-rich western Pailin, and demobilise its 8,000-strong insurgent force.

In return the government would begin talks with the Khmer Rouge and consider offering it cabinet positions.

Held responsible for the deaths of one million Cambodians during a region of terror in the 70s, the Khmer Rouge rejected participation in U.N.-organised elections in May 1993.

It continues to wage a low-level guerrilla war to reinforce demands for an advisory role in government.

Diplomats said Monday both sides hoped to use the dry season to gain a military advantage. The Khmer Rouge holds about ten per cent of Cambodian territory at present.

Normally a voice of moderation, Cambodia's First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh earlier expressed his frustration at the lack of progress towards national reconciliation by describing the Khmer Rouge demands as "not realistic."

The Khmer Rouge was "insincere" and did not appear to want to recognise the Cambodian government despite insisting it be a member of the same administration, he said.

The focus of renewed fighting is expected to be in Siem Reap province where government troops are mobilising to capture the insurgents' northern headquarters at Anlong Veng.

year grip on power in elections in July was offering to discuss amendments to the bills, a move widely seen by the seven-party coalition as a tactic to delay debate on them.

Some legislators from the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a main player in the coalition, were also opposed to the bills which they argue will decimate the party in the next election.

The main bill is aimed at reducing the size of the electoral district from plural to single seat constituencies, and electing a section of the lower house by proportional representation.

According to coalition partners, it will eliminate excessive intra-mural rivalries and attempted vote buying. But critics argue it will not end the influence of money in politics.

Another bill, designed to ban individual politicians from directly receiving corporate donations, is also said to have loopholes since it allows political parties and their fundraising organisations to accept them.

Mr. Eusekwa himself has been acknowledged in controversy over a 100 million yen (\$910,000) loan he received.

SARAJEVO (Agencies). — Bosnia's warring factions accused each other of pressing ahead with fighting Monday, a day ahead of the latest peace talks in Geneva.

Muslim-controlled Sarajevo Radio said Serb shelling of the central Bosnian town of Olujin continued overnight, while Bosnian government forces around the Serb-held town of Brcko in the north of the country also came under fire.

Bosnian Serb army sources said Muslim forces were to blame for the Brcko fighting, having retreated from the Serb positions Monday morning, the Yugoslav News Agency-Tinjan reported.

Karadzic's office, said he has issued a "severe warning" forbidding any attacks by Serb troops on the Sarajevo Airport, on UNPROFOR troops, on the International Committee of the Red Cross and on any other humanitarian organisations.

Mr. Karadzic also ordered Bosnian Serb military leaders to ensure "full protection and free access" to U.N. military observers and aid convoys carrying food and humanitarian supplies through Serb-held territory.

The communique added Mr. Karadzic had issued the order to "prevent any unwanted incidents" with the international

Croatian Radin accused the Muslims of shelling the central Bosnian town of Gornji Vakuf and said Muslim forces were regrouping in the area.

The Muslim-led Bosnian Army has enjoyed considerable military success against the Croats in central Bosnia in recent months, but there is evidence the Muslims are coming under increasing pressure from the Serbs in the region.

Muslim leaders were meeting Islamic foreign ministers in Geneva ahead of a resumption of peace talks between Bosnia's warring Serbs, Muslim and Croat factions Tuesday.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has ordered his troops to stop attacking U.N. Protection Force and humanitarian organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serb news agency (SRNA) reported Monday.

The agency, citing an official

Meanwhile in Geneva Monday, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali met with a delegation from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to discuss the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia on the eve of a resumption on peace talks between the three warring parties.

The eight OIC foreign ministers who met with Dr. Ghali are seeking a lifting of the U.N. arms embargo in Bosnia so that the mainly Muslim population there could better defend itself against the Serbs and Croats.

In recent Olovo fighting, Sasa Kralj, a photographer for the U.S. news agency Associated Press, was seriously injured by a mortar explosion. His agency reported Monday.

Mr. Kralj, a Croatian national, was injured Sunday in the spleen and ribs along

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A severe earthquake jolted southern California early Monday and was felt from San Diego to Las Vegas, Nevada.

The quake was felt at 4:31 a.m. for about 30 seconds or more, and several aftershocks followed within minutes. Dishes fell off shelves, some buildings were damaged and there were widespread phone and power outages.

The National Earthquake Centre in Golden, Co., registered the quake at 6.6 on the Richter Scale, according to spokesman John Minsh.

The epicenter was in the San Fernando Valley, southeast of Los Angeles, said Kate Hinton, a seismologist at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.

A Cable News Network (CNN) reporter said he could see the glow of a fire in the San Fernando Valley.

leaving the region in their cars as others stood outside their homes apparently fearing aftershocks.

The valley, with about three million residents, is about 50 miles (80 kms) east of downtown Los Angeles.

CNN talk show host Larry King told his network by telephone: "Here it goes again — it's shaking even as I talk to you."

"The telephone shook, bed shook, the room shook," he said after the aftershock.

The quake was felt in Santa Barbara and Bakersfield to the north and San Diego to the south and as far as Las Vegas.

A reporter in Glendale, 10 miles (16 kms) north of Los Angeles, said the quake lasted 30 seconds and was strong enough to send a television slamming to the floor. Sirens

He was rushed in Tuzla, about 50 kilometres north of Olovo, where he underwent surgery and was to be transported to Split, in southern Croatia, Monday by the U.N. Protection Force Nordic Battalion based in Tuzla.

The leaders of Bosnia's warring factions, have begun arriving in Geneva for their second round of peace talks but their uncompromising statements hold out little hope of a settlement.

Bosnian Vice President Ejup Galić called the negotiations a "big lie" Sunday, signalling that the map of a divided Bosnia which will be on the table

when talks began Tuesday night as well be torn up now.

The latest Western-brokered proposal involves giving the Muslim-led Bosnian government a third of the country. But Bosnian leaders now say they will only sign for much more.

Muslims made up 43 per cent of Bosnia's population before the war. But after 21 months of fratricidal fighting sparked by secession from Yugoslavia, they now hold only 15 per cent.

Belgrade-backed Serbs control 70 per cent of the republic while Bosnia's Croats, supported by Zagreb, have 15 per cent.

The Muslims now say they want the Serbs to give back all the land which was settled by Muslims before the war. They have been boosted by victories against Croat forces and seem prepared to put up a tough

HO CHI MINH CITY. Vietnam (AFP) — "Everywhere you go, the kids wanna rock," sang Canadian Bryan Adams to an audience of Vietnamese wholeheartedly but were a bit unsure of how to respond to it. Adams' Sunday night show was the biggest concert in Vietnam since Bob Hope tried in vain to boost the morale of U.S. soldiers fighting a lost cause in the 1970s, the promoters said. But Adams himself chose a different frame of reference, saying he and his four-piece band were the first to put on a live rock concert since

James Brown bawled his risqué soul in Saigon. "I don't know why we are the first but it's very flattering. It's good huh?" he asked the audience after a few opening numbers. His wholesome, anthemic and his high-contrast sentimental ballads — like the smash hit (Everything) Do I do it for you — provided the perfect blend of good, clean fun and it was no accident that Adams, a champion of environmental causes, was allowed to play here. His group were on an Asian tour capitalising on the success of his latest album *So Far So Good*. He requested to play in Vietnam but first the government "screened my records, videos, press statements, everything I have done," he told reporters after the show. Adam's espousal of green issues seemed lost on the Ho Chi Minh crowds who have recently woken up from their Socialist hibernation and

embraced capitalism with all the zeal of the born-again convert. "There's so few cars here, it's amazing. No cars that's great, that's fantastic," he told the audience who looked more embarrassed than heartened at the news. Adams, who has a reputation for putting on powerful, if not a bit intimidating, the first kid to rock again in Vietnam and so "held back" on stage, afraid that if he really let it rip, things might get out of hand. "I didn't want it to get too wild. I didn't know how the police would react. You have so much control but why cause panic?" he said, adding "the next time, man."

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's opposition leader said Monday he will seek permission next month to visit North Korea to help resolve a bitter row over Pyongyang's suspected nuclear arms development programme.

A spokesman for the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) quoted party leader Lee Ki-Taek as saying that shortly after a special parliamentary session expected next month he would apply for government approval to visit Pyongyang.

"If I visit the North, I would urge President Kim Il-Sung to hold a summit (with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam) and a three-way meeting, involving (South) Korea, the United States and North Korea," Mr. Lee was quoted as telling Cardinal Stephen So-Hwan Kim, South Korea's Roman Catholic leader, during a new year courtesy call.

"I believe the opposition

party will be able to play a role in arranging a South-North meeting to help resolve nuclear problems," Mr. Lee said. He was elected the DP leader at the party's convention last March.

Mr. Lee first disclosed his intention to visit the North, still technically at war with the South since the 1950-53 Korean conflict, during a news conference last week. North Korea Saturday welcomed Mr. Lee's offer to visit Pyongyang.

The cardinal warned Mr. Lee that North Korea may try to make use of his trip for its own political propaganda, the DP spokesman said.

Under the nation's security law, Mr. Lee and other South Koreans must obtain government approval to visit the North.

Mr. Lee had said the government of President Kim Young-Sam has been left in the background in international nego-

He said Seoul should play a leading role in trying to resolve the nuclear dispute with the North, which insists direct talks between Pyongyang and Washington is the only way to settle the issue.

North Korea has for months been the focus of international suspicion that it is attempting to build a nuclear bomb. It denies the charge.

Dialogue between the two Koreas to discuss an exchange of special envoys, which Seoul believes would help settle the nuclear impasse, has been stalled since last November because of a Northern demand for the cancellation of a joint U.S.-South Korean military exercise.

The North says the exercise, codenamed Team Spirit, is a rehearsal for invasion. Seoul and Washington say it is purely defensive.

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico (AP) — Soldiers hunted for guerrillas in the mountains of southern Mexico and, despite a promised amnesty by the government, a rebel leader vowed to keep up the fight for Indian rights.

Eight suspected rebels were arrested Sunday, but there was no reaction Monday from guerrilla leaders to a plea by President Carlos Salinas De Gortari to lay down arms.

Ms. Salinas announced a general amnesty Sunday, saying it covered all "violent acts" committed by the rebels from Jan. 1, when the uprising started, through Sunday.

Hours before his announcement, rebels of the Zapatista National Liberation Army were quoted by the Mexican media as vowing they wouldn't lay down arms until their demands were met.

One guerrilla leader, who identified himself only as Maj. Mario, said the rebels had numerous demands for ending

the misery of the 3.2 million, mostly indigenous people of Chiapas, an impoverished state bordering Guatemala.

"We are not going to stop the war until we have a satisfactory response," said the guerrilla, interviewed among his heavily armed and masked fighters at a mountainous jungle base.

"We have declared this war for many reasons, most importantly for our poor people. We have suffered 500 years of exploitation by the national and international bourgeoisie," he told the Mexico City daily Reforma.

He said the guerrillas, believed to number as many as 2,000, were abiding by the government's unilateral ceasefire, but would defend themselves if attacked by the 14,000 troops deployed in Chiapas.

In the pro-government village of Oxchuc, villagers said the eight arrested suspects, who had been fingered by the mayor, were turned over to

authorities. Hundreds of troops Sunday poured into Oxcuc and the surrounding hills while two single-engine propeller planes with rocket launchers and two helicopters flew overhead. Rebel activity had been reported the night before, but the army made no aerial attacks.

In San Cristobal De Las Casas, the government-appointed mediator, Manuel Camacho Solis, said the president's amnesty covers soldiers as well as rebels involved in the Chiapas conflict.

Mr. Camacho also said he had exchanged messages with the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army.

"We have begun real negotiations through messages being sent by both sides," Mr. Camacho said, declining to elaborate.

Zapatista fighters seized San Cristobal and several outlying towns in Chiapas on New Year's Day to highlight the plight of poor Mayan Indians.

AVORIAZ, France (AFP) — Germinal, the lavish Claude Berri film of Emile Zola's classic about a mining town in 19th-century France, walked away with 12 nominations for César Awards, it was announced here Sunday. The film, the most expensive French production yet, sold six million tickets here and pushed the sales of Zola's novel to 700,000 issues in 1993 but won disappointing reviews despite its stars Gerard Depardieu and Miu-Miu. Among other leading contenders for the awards was the acclaimed *Three Colours — Blue*, the first part of Krzysztof Kieslowski's trilogy starring Juliette Binoche as a widow remaking her life in isolation from the world after the death of her child and composer husband. The film picked up nine nominations including Binoche as best actress, while other leading contenders with the same number of nominations were Jean-Marie Poire's hit *The Visitors* and *Smoking/No Smoking*, a two-film adaptation by Alain Resnais of work by British playwright Alan Ayckbourn. Nominees for best actor include Pierre Arditi, Daniel Auteuil, Christian Clavier, Michel Boujenah and Jean Reno. Best actress nominations went to Catherine Deneuve, Sabine Azema, Josiane Balasko, Binoche, Anouk Grimsberg and Miu-Miu. The awards are to be announced at a ceremony on Feb. 26.

LOS OLIVOS, California (AFP) — Embattled superstar Michael Jackson invited 100 inner-city children to his Neverland ranch in honour of Martin Luther King Day. Jackson, who has been accused of sexually molesting a 13-year-old boy, spent Saturday with the disadvantaged children, who were picked for their especially good school records. Saturday would have been King's 66th birthday. Jackson's ranch has a movie theatre, a zoo and an amusement park. Jackson was accused of sexual molestation by an unidentified child who is now 14. The civil suit is to go to trial on March 21. Jackson denies any misconduct and no criminal charges have been filed.

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EUROPEAN SOCCER

Romario punch earns red card

PARIS (AFP) — Barcelona's Brazilian star Romario was sent off for the first time in the Spanish league Sunday for punching Sevilla's Diego Simeone in the face.

Though the match ended goalless, leaving "Barça" three points behind leaders Deportivo La Coruna, Romario's left jab ensured the Catalan club kept in the headlines this weekend. The 27-year-old Brazilian striker was immediately sent off.

Barcelona's Dutch coach Johann Cruyff said after the match: "Romario did not have to retaliate against Simeone." Romario came on for Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov for the last half-hour and had only been on the field 15 minutes when the incident happened. Simeone appeared to have provoked Romario.

Spain's media was surprised by the incident as Romario, who tops the league's goal charts with 16, is not a volatile player.

Barcelona should have earlier taken advantage of 10-man Sevilla when Manuel Jimenez was sent off just after the break.

Meanwhile Romario's Brazilian colleagues in La Coruna's team had a better weekend as Mauro da Silva and Bebeto scored in a 3-1 victory at Valencia in the mid-point of the Spanish season.

Barragan Claudio got the other for Deportivo and Jose Gálvez had earlier opened the scoring for Valencia.

Xavier Escaich had an incredible game for sporting Gijon with four goals in their 7-1 win over Osasuna Pamplona.

Croatia's Mario Stanik hit two and Fernandez Abelardo the other as Gijon regained third place.

Polish striker Jozek Ziobor scored for Pamplona, but it did not prevent them dropping to the foot of the table. Lerida's goalless draw at home to racing Santander was enough to bring them up from bottom spot.

An early goal from Emilio Butragueno and two penalties from Gonzalez Michel earned fourth-placed Real Madrid a 3-2 victory over nine-man real Zaragoza. Arias Belsue was sent off in the first half hour and Fernando Caceres received his marching orders in the second half.

In Italy, AC Milan's third 0-0 draw running, in front of 40,000 spectators at Genoa, propelled them further ahead. Milan lie three points ahead as Sampdoria could not capitalise on the neighbourly act of Genoa, who share the same Luigi Ferraris Stadium.

Champions Milan were found wanting up front despite the presence of Jean-Pierre Papin in his first league match after suspension for headbutting.

But Papin, who scored against Parma in the European Super Cup in midweek, was tightly marked and failed to impose himself.

Montenegro's Dejan Savicevic was also virtually invisible in Milan's midfield. Sampdoria were well beaten 2-1 at lowly Piacenza. Marco Piovanni opened the scoring for Piacenza on the half hour and Marco Ferrante put them two ahead a quarter of an hour after the break.

Bald winger Attilio Lombardo struck home an 83rd minute penalty, but Sampdoria failed to find an equaliser in the closing minutes.

England's David Platt was brought into the match on 72 minutes, but was unable to prevent "Samp's", fifth league loss this season.

Depleted Juventus moved into second place on goal difference with their second draw running against midtable opposition.

Giovanni Trapattoni's men drew 0-0 at home to as Roma but both sides had a man sent off. Juventus' German defender Jurgen Kohler and Roma's Walter Bonacina were sent off

together after a clash two minutes before half-time.

But Juventus were Massimo Carrara, Brazilian Julio Cesar, Dino Baggio, Andrea Fortunato and Gianluca Vialli.

Lazio's Roberto di Matteo and Roberto Cravero earned a 2-0 victory at home to Reggina. Di Matteo scored on the stroke of half-time and Cravero fired home a penalty five minutes after the break.

England's Paul Gascoigne excellently marshalled the midfield and managed to complete the whole match, as Lazio wiped away the memory of their 4-1 loss to Foggia the week before.

Fifth-placed Parma drew 1-1 at bottom club Lecce in a late match Sunday.

Andrea Silenzi went further ahead in the goal scoring charts as Torino held Atalanta to a 2-2 draw. Silenzi hit his 13th league goal five minutes before the break, but Maurizio Codacciotti equalised just before the half-time whistle.

Roberto Rambaudi gave hosts Atalanta the advantage, before Paolo Poggi earned his side a valuable point.

In France, Paris of St Germain and Olympique Marseille stole the show here this weekend, as Bordeaux failed to capitalise on an ill-tempered draw between France's top two clubs.

PSG maintained their four point lead over Marseille, the European champions, after a 1-1 draw at the Parc des Princes saw fists and boots fly.

Bordeaux could have exploited that stalemate, and gone to within a point of Marseille, by a winning visit to sixth-placed Nantes Saturday evening.

Instead, a side with three first-team regulars missing were trounced 4-1 by a club looking for a UEFA Cup place next season. Bordeaux also had Dutch international Richard Witschge sent off in the 67th minute for a bookable offence.

Marseille also had fullback Jocelyn Angloma sent off 20 minutes from the end for a lunging tackle on PSG fullback Patrick Colleter. Vincent Guerin opened the scoring for PSG and Rudi Voller equalised.

In Belgium, Anderlecht maintained their four point lead from FC Brugge with a 2-1 win at RC Liege. Ajax Amsterdam's 4-1 win at home to Maastricht kept them two points clear in Holland.

Neo-Nazis go on trial in attack on American athletes

SUHL, Germany (AP) — Two young German neo-Nazis accused of attacking a member of the U.S. luge team last fall went on trial Monday.

The Oct. 29 attack caused outrage in the United States, and cast further doubt on Germany's ability to cope with its extreme rightist menace.

Prosecutors have charged the two neo-Nazis with causing grievous bodily harm. The suspects, Tino Voelkel, 16, and 21-year-old Silvio Eschrich, could receive up to five years in prison if convicted.

The trial was expected to last only one day.

According to the indictment, the two led a pack of about 15 neo-Nazi skinheads in kicking and punching American luge team member Duncan Kennedy outside a bar in the winter resort of Oberhof near Suhl in eastern Germany.

Kennedy stood his ground so that teammate Robert Pipkins could get away from the attackers. The skinheads had insulted Pipkins, who is black, by making monkey noises and "giggers" and by calling him "nigger."

Kennedy, during his testimony, identified the two skinheads on trial as his assailants.

"Out of the people hitting me, I could only see two or three faces, and they were the faces I saw," Kennedy said, referring to the two defendants.

Two skinhead witnesses, Dennis Schmidt and Joerg Stubenrauch, testified that the Americans provoked the attack, first by cornering Voelkel, who was wearing a new Nazi T-shirt. Schmidt and Stubenrauch said Kennedy yelled obscenities against Germany and Nazis.

Kennedy denied he had provoked the assault, adding "Why would I say this to 15 skinheads?"

The courthouse in the quiet town of Suhl was besieged by reporters and TV crews from Germany, the United States and other countries.

Prosecutors have filed charges against five more youths in the attack on Kennedy.

Kennedy and other U.S. luge team members were in Oberhof during the weekend for World Cup competition, in which Kennedy finished second in the men's singles event Saturday.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sampras, Courier, Ivanisevic, Lendl, Novacek, Graff ease into second round

MELBOURNE (Agencies) — Pete Sampras is taking every precaution to ensure his body stands up to the pressure of two weeks' hard slog at the Australian Open.

The American world number one began his pursuit of a fourth Grand Slam title with a comfortable 6-4 6-0 7-6 win over Australian wildcard Joshua Eagle Monday but admitted he was wary of injury on the unyielding rebound acc courts at Flinders park.

"I've often found the surface is difficult on the body ... There's just no give out there," said Sampras, who suffered from sore shins in Australia 12 months ago.

"On other courts you can slide, here you stick. My body gets a lot more stiff than it does on hard courts."

To help ensure his shin problems do not recur, Sampras is again travelling with his own personal massage specialist who was also part of the top seed's entourage during his wins at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open last year.

In another match, Jim Courier took 4 hours and 42 minutes to subdue feisty fellow American Bryan Shelton Monday and keep alive his dream of a third straight Australian Open title.

Courier rallied from 1-3 and 0-40 in the final set to beat the unheralded Shelton 4-6, 6-1, 6-7 (4-7), 6-2, 6-4.

Courier won five of the last six games in a first-round match that thrilled the centre court crowd on the opening day of the tournament.

"I didn't bite," Courier said. "I came out and played. I put my cards on the table."

Shelton, a 28-year-old who has never made it past the third round of any Grand Slam tournament, frequently matched Courier from the backcourt and served and volleyed impressively until he crumpled at the end.

Martin Damm of the Czech republic earlier pulled off the first upset by ousting no. 7 seed Cedric Pioline of France.

Damm, a 21-year-old from Prague ranked 80th in the world to U.S. Open finalist Pioline's ninth, won 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-3.

Pioline also lost in the first round of the Hopman Cup and New South Wales Open and the defeat against Damm capped a disastrous Australian campaign for him.

In other surprises, Sabine Hack of Germany proved too steady for women's no. 11 seed Zina Garrison-Jackson of the United States, winning 7-5, 6-3, while Yayuk Basuki of Indonesia ousted no. 15 seed Nathalie Tauziat of France 6-4,

7-6 (9-7). Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia, the fifth seed, downed American Alex O'Brien 6-4, 6-0, 6-2 in an impressive opener.

Ivanisevic showed no signs of discomfort from an injury to his left elbow, ending the match with an ace and an unreturnable serve. He served 15 aces in the one-hour, 20-minute match.

"He's a good player, but I played good today," said Ivanisevic. "I served great and my rhythm was good."

Ivanisevic was cheered by several hundred flag-waving Croatian fans.

"I feel like I'm playing at home," he said.

Another power server, Marc Rosset of Switzerland, the no. 11 seed and 1992 Olympic gold medalist, advanced with a 6-2, 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 victory over Chris Wilkinson of Britain.

Three-time champion Mats Wilander of Sweden, given a wild card, beat Milan Velic of Bulgaria 6-1, 4-6, 6-0, 6-0.

Ivan Lendl, the Australian Open champion in 1989 and 1990 and seeded 15th, took 2 hours, 31 minutes to wear down Canadian Greg Rusedski 6-4, 7-6 (7-4), 7-5 in a match in which the players rarely ventured from the baseline.

Karel Novacek of the Czech republic, seeded 14th, also advanced with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory over Daniel Orsanic of Argentina.

Courier, the no. 3 seed, is aiming to become only the third man to win three straight Australian titles.

Courier clenched his fist in relief and triumph after sealing victory with a searing backhand crosscourt as Shelton, ranked 99th in the world, adv-



Jim Courier

anced to the net.

"He played well on a lot of the big points at the end of the match," Courier said.

"I can play better, and the encouraging thing is that I get a chance to do that."

Shelton, who mixed 20 aces with 20 double faults, had an explanation for his slump.

"I was already preparing my acceptance speech out there," he said.

In the women's singles, three-time champion Steffi Graf, an overwhelming favourite in the absence of Monica Seles, took just 23 minutes to clinch her place in the second round.

The top-seeded German, chasing her fourth straight title in Grand Slam events, led American Kimberly Po 6-1, 2-0 when Po withdrew with a stomach muscle strain.

Graf raced through the first

set in 16 minutes in an effective start with her powerful backhand.

Graf, 24, is chasing her 80th career title and her 15th Grand Slam victory in the absence of archrival Seles, winner of the Australian Open for the past three years. Graf won the event between 1988-1990.

"Sure it's different with Monica not being here, but I'm not thinking about it now that I'm playing the tournament," Graf said.

Seles had hoped to make her comeback at the Australian Open, but still has not recovered from being stabbed in the back by a spectator during a match April in Hamburg, Germany.

Graf next faces Australian Nicole Provis, a 7-5, 6-4 winner over Clare Wood of Britain. Provis beat Graf last year in the Federation Cup.

Anke Huber, the no. 7 seed, joined compatriots Graf and Hack in the second round after defeating Leila Meskhi of Georgia 6-1, 6-3 in impressive style.

Huber reversed a loss to Meskhi last week in Sydney and said she had played more aggressively.

No. 12 seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa downed Petra Berger of Germany 6-1, 6-3, and no. 16 Lindsay Davenport, a 17-year-old American, rallied to defeat Canadian Patricia Hy 3-6, 6-2, 7-5.

Former U.S. Open champion Tracy Austin, playing in her first Grand Slam event in a decade, beat South African Elna Reinach 6-1, 7-5.

The tournament, played on synthetic rebound ace hard courts, is sponsored by Ford and continues through Jan. 30.

Kerrigan returns to the ice

STONEHAM, Massachusetts (Agencies) — Olympian Nancy Kerrigan skated here Sunday for the first time since she was attacked at the U.S. figure skating championships, saying her injured knee felt stiff but otherwise all right.

"My knee was a little stiff and it took some time to get loosened up," Kerrigan said. "But it felt good to be on the ice again."

Kerrigan avoided reporters and spectators by slipping out to a local rink at 2:00 a.m., accompanied by some family members and orthopedic specialist doctor Mahlon Bradley.

She did not attempt any jumps. She was scheduled to skate again Monday.

Kerrigan suffered a severely bruised right knee when a man bashed her on the leg with a metal club Jan. 6 as she left a practice session at the national championships in Detroit.

The bodyguard of rival skater Tonya Harding has been charged with conspiracy in the case, along with two other men.

Harding won the U.S. women's title in Kerrigan's absence and both women were named to the U.S. team for the Lillehammer Olympics.

Kerrigan is scheduled to perform a full programme before a special group of judges Feb. 6 to determine if she is fit for the games. The U.S. team is to leave for Norway Feb. 9, and the Olympics begin Feb. 12.

Meanwhile, Harding took the offensive in her fight to save her Olympic berth, insisting she had nothing to do with the attack on Kerrigan and expressing anger that anyone in her camp might have.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TANNIAN BRISCH
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TRUMP COUP TOMMY TOILS AWAY

North-South vulnerable. West

♠ 6 5 2

♥ 9 5 4 3

♦ 7 6

♣ 6 4 3

WEST EAST

♠ 9 8 7

♥ 10 8

♦ 10 9 4 3

♣ 10 8 7 5 4 3 2

SOUTH

♠ A K Q 10

♥ A 7

♦ A K Q 2

♣ A K

The bidding:

West: North East South

♠ 4 7 Pass 4 *

♥ 4 7 Pass 5 *

♦ 6 5 Pass 5 *

♣ 6 5 Pass 5 *

Opening lead: Queen of ♠

West 1993 finally going to be

Tommy's year? Readers of this col-

umn are aware of Trump Coup

Tommy's uncanny ability to play

well only when trumps are breaking

badly and there seemed to be an

epidemic of poor splits at the club.

Credit for reaching slam really

belongs to Tommy's partner. Since

North had not promised anything of

value, Tommy's cue-bid followed by

a jump over game showed a hand

virtually capable of taking 11 tricks

on its own and North judged that

three-card support and a doubler

was worth a trick.

West made the normal lead of the

queen of clubs and the spectators

were beginning to wonder how

Tommy would find a way to go

down. Two everything changed. On

the second round of trumps, West

discarded a club. The change that

overcame Tommy was almost as

radical as the metamorphosis of Mr.

Hyde from Dr. Jekyll.

To bring home the contract Tom-

my would have to find East with

four diamonds and at least two

clubs. After cashing the remaining

high clubs, Tommy played off three

high diamonds, then ruffed a dia-

mond in dummy. Fortunately, ev-

eryone followed. Tommy could now

claim the slam.

Dummy's last club was led and,

since East could not afford to ruff,

the defender discarded a heart. De-

clarer ruffed, cashed the ace of

hearts and exited with a heart.

Tommy did not mind which defend-

er won, because the last two cards in

the East hand were J 9 of trumps

and Tommy held Q 10. Since East's

trumps were trapped, Tommy's

slam was in the bag.

International Community School
(The British Curriculum School in Amman)

The International Community School, in Khilda, requires a primary teacher from September 1994. The successful applicant must have full British, or equivalent, teaching qualifications and preferably have working knowledge of the U.K. national curriculum. Interested candidates are requested to contact the school office for further details and application form which should be returned to ICS by Thursday, 27th January.

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TENDER INVITATION

UNESCO is providing urgent humanitarian assistance to Iraq to rehabilitate schools. In order to carry out this task, the procurement of materials for building renovation and the local manufacturing of school furniture will be effected through international competitive bidding. Contracts for a total value of approximately US\$300,000 are foreseen. Tender documents may be obtained from UNEDBAS, P.O. Box 2270, Tel: 606559, Fax: 682183, Amman, Jordan. The bid closing date is Monday 7 February 1994.

Reference: 208/IRQ/11/BER/PEC

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Lebanon praises Geneva summit as breakthrough

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanon on Monday hailed the Geneva summit between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad as bringing the Middle East a step closer to peace.

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said Sunday's summit was "historic" and praised Mr. Assad's stand.

The summit "opens a new page which we expect will lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace," Mr. Hariri told reporters.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher telephoned Mr. Hariri after the summit to brief him on the meeting, stressing that Lebanon was discussed at length in Geneva.

South Lebanon is the last battle line between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Twenty-five Israeli soldiers were killed there last year in bomb attacks and clashes with guerrillas.

Mr. Hariri told Beirut Radio that Mr. Assad raised the issue of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 of 1978 which calls for Israeli withdrawal from its 11-kilometres wide occupation zone in the south.

He said he felt "great relief" at the positions Mr. Assad took during the summit.

"I salute President Assad who included 425 in the order of the day of this historic summit," Mr. Hariri said.

The subject of the Israeli invasion of the south took a major part of the negotiations, he added.

Lebanese and Israeli negotiators have made no known progress on working out terms for an Israeli withdrawal from the south at 11 rounds of Middle East peace talks in Washington.

Mr. Clinton and Mr. Assad did not say at their Geneva news conference whether they also discussed the withdrawal of Syria's 35,000 troops from Lebanon.

But Mr. Clinton said Mr. Assad had agreed that the Middle East peace process should lead to a "free and independent" Lebanon.

Mr. Hariri called the Geneva summit a turning point for the peace process. He said Mr. Christopher told him in a telephone conversation after the summit that 1994 would be "a year of peace in the Middle East."

Mr. Assad deserved the thanks of the Lebanese people for the stand he took with Mr. Clinton on South Lebanon, Mr. Hariri said.

"President Assad has serious and honourable stands in this matter... that will gain the appreciation of the Lebanese people and government," he said.

Foreign Minister Fares Bouze said that "the principle of a comprehensive peace, which both Lebanon and Syria have repeatedly called for, has been adopted in Geneva."

"A clear signal that agreement was reached at least on major issues" emerged from the summit, Mr. Bouze said.

Lebanon's leading newspapers agreed.

"Up until yesterday Syria was the problem but today, after the Geneva meeting, it is the solution," wrote Gbassan Tuani, a veteran politician and owner of Al Nahar newspaper.

Under a banner headline reading the "Lion's share" — a reference to Mr. Assad whose name in Arabic means lion — the editor-in-chief of L'Orient

OIC urges U.N. to authorise air strikes

GENEVA (AFP) — The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) called Monday on U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to authorise air strikes "without delay" against Bosnian Serb forces.

Foreign ministers from leading nations of the OIC met here with Dr. Ghali to urge the U.N. to follow through on a pledge at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit to use air strikes.

"We hope that this NATO declaration will not be construed as an empty threat and that it will not be the subject of procedural wrangling," said OIC Secretary General Hamid Algabid.

"We request that the U.N. secretary-general authorise such strikes without delay," Dr. Algabid said.

Sabbah rejects criticism of Vatican-Israel accord

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem Michael Sabbah Monday dismissed criticism over the Dec. 30 agreement on mutual recognition between Israel and the Vatican saying that the church should not be absent from the scene at this crucial juncture in the region's history.

"This is a historic and crucial stage that the region is passing through," Patriarch Sabbah said during a press conference held at the bishop's office.

"The church should not be absent at this stage especially that Christians have been living in this region since 2,000 years."

He said that this presence was both a right and duty that the church had to fulfill.

"In order to exercise an effective presence, the church had to organise its relations with all concerned parties," he pointed out.

"And that's why the church spoke equally to Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians and all concerned Arab countries through their embassies."

He said the "voice of believers" who have prayed and who have faith in the land, should be heard. Those believers, he added, have rights and duties and have their own vision of the methods used to reach equitable solution for the parties oppressed.

According to Patriarch Sabbah, the Vatican's recognition of Israel was linked to "eliminating injustices" that befell the Palestinian peoples.

"In principle, the injustice is lifted," he said. "In reality, it didn't... but negotiations are underway and the two peoples are organising bilateral relations."

The accord, which is expected to be followed by a visit of Pope John Paul to the Holy Land, did not dwell on the Jerusalem issue save for the



Michael Sabbah
fact that "the two sides recognise, the unique nature and significance of the holy city to them and to the rest of the world."

"The agreement did not tackle the Jerusalem issue for a very simple reason: Jerusalem is of particular concern to more than the two parties — the Vatican and Israel," he said.

"There is also the religious parties who represent the Arab and Muslim worlds, the Christian world and the Jewish world. The presence of all of these parties is a must in order to enhance logical debate over the Jerusalem issue."

Princess Diana mobbed by fans after ballet visit

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana was mobbed by well-wishers after going to a ballet performance without her royal bodyguards, British newspaper reports Monday.

The tabloid Sun said Princess Diana was mobbed by "hordes of adoring fans" who touched her and insisted she shake hands as she left London's Royal Opera House on Friday.

The princess was then forced to push through a large crowd to get to her waiting car.

"Di's mob peril: Street crowds swarm go-it-alone princess" was the headline on the Sun's front page report. The 32-year-old princess, who is officially separated from her husband, heir-to-the throne Prince Charles, announced late last year that she was temporarily withdrawing from her public duties as a member of the royal family and hoped to lead a more private life away from the media spotlight.

The Sun quoted a former senior policeman as saying: "She is seen as a target to be attacked by terrorists, kidnappers and cranks."

Canadian parliament faces perks cuts

OTTAWA (AFP) — Prime Minister Jean Chretien said Sunday that members of parliament will be the first to suffer from a wide range of government expenditure cuts.

Just a day before the new parliament, elected last November, sits for the first time, Mr. Chretien's office told the 295 members that they will have to pay commercial rates for cafeteria meals, use of parliament's gymnasium and hair cutters and will have fewer trips financed by the taxpayer. A free shoe shine service for members is to be abolished. And if a legislator wants to have a picture framed for the office, the cost will come out of his pocket.

Previously, lawmakers were given an annual allowance of \$300 for picture frames. MP's will also get less money for sending "newsletters" — often thinly disguised self-promotional brochures — to their constituents.

Government whip Alfonso Gagliano, who drew up the new austerity measures, said Sunday they would save the Canadian taxpayer more than five million dollars (\$3.75 million) a year.

Top surgeon: Human race faces destruction

LONDON (R) — The human race faces destruction because of overpopulation, a top British surgeon said in a newspaper interview published Monday.

"World population is increasing at a rate which is unsustainable," Sir Roy Calne, professor of surgery at Cambridge University and the head of Britain's first liver transplant programme in 1968, told the Today tabloid.

"If we go on like this there will be conflict, misery and famine like there is in Somalia. My main thesis is that most of our troubles are due to scientific advances and the use of science without really knowing where it is going to."

Sir Roy, who is writing a book on the issue, said parents worldwide should have only two children because people were now living longer and exhausting natural resources.

Marilyn Horne throws party for 60th birthday

NEW YORK (R) — Diva Marilyn Horne threw a 60th birthday party for herself at Carnegie Hall Sunday, with some of the world's greatest singers on stage and in the widely applauded audience.

The Metropolitan Opera's Samuel Ramey made a surprise appearance to sing Old Man River to bring the packed house down after appearances by old Horne friends Montserrat Caballe and Frederica Von Stade and young proteges Ruth Ann Swenson and Renee Fleming.

Fleming wiped tears from her eyes after Horne ended the party singing the spiritual At The River and veteran Metropolitan Opera star Helen Donat made her Carnegie Hall debut filling in for the ill Benita Valente and had the whole audience singing with her during a song from Lehár's The Merry Widow.

The audience knew it was not going to be just another concert when Luciano Pavarotti showed up and took a seat in the orchestra winning applause and shouts of "bravo" for just turning up. The audience was dotted with singers and composers helping the woman they call "Jackie" celebrate her 60th birthday.

Bad weather brings lull in Kabul fighting

KABUL (Agencies) — Warring factions stalled each other sporadically Monday, but snow, rain and freezing temperatures eased the intense battle for the capital, that began Jan. 1.

Rival parties worked behind the scenes to arrange a ceasefire, but no progress was reported.

Bad weather has slowed the fighting on several occasions since the warfare broke out 17 days ago between President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces and the main rivals, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and warlord Rashid Dostum.

However, clear weather inevitably brings heavier fighting. Full-scale battles, complete with air strikes and heavy shelling, are expected to resume when the weather improves.

Some 45 military commanders who belong to smaller parties and are largely independent of the three main factions, have joined forces to try to arrange a truce.

Amnesty concerned by trial

LONDON (R) — Amnesty International said Monday it was concerned at aspects of a military trial that convicted 10 men of plotting to kill King Hussein, including allegations of torture and forced confessions.

The London-based human rights organisation also urged the Jordanian authorities to commute death sentences handed down against three of the men by the military tribunal on Sunday. Seven others received long jail terms.

Amnesty, which had observers at the trial, said it was particularly concerned at the lengthy pre-trial detention of the defendants, allegations of torture during this time and lack of access to doctors of their choice.

"Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the continued practice of prolonged incommunicado detention in Jordan, as it facilitates torture and ill-treatment and compromises the right of a fair trial," a statement said.

Amnesty said the lack of what it called fundamental safeguards during pre-trial detention also cast doubt on the validity of any statements or confessions given by detainees.

The defendants retracted their confessions in court, saying they had been made under torture whilst they were incommunicado.

"If the authorities have nothing to hide, it would be in their interest to introduce such basic and long-overdue safeguards," Amnesty said.

The 10 men were convicted of a plot to kill the king during a cadets' graduation ceremony at Muta University last June.

Algerian army 'will be neutral'

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Eight days ahead of a key conference on Algeria's political future, Defence Minister General Lamine Zeroul said Sunday the army would stay neutral, but warned opposition parties not to boycott the forum.

In a televised address after the main news bulletin, Gen. Zeroul said the army would "not allow itself to be the instrument of any party."

But recalling the landmark divorce of the army from the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), Gen. Zeroul said: "The army's withdrawal from the political stage five years ago does not mean that it will stand back with its arms folded when faced with dangerous situations that threaten the people's future."

Gen. Zeroul told opposition parties that it was a "natural duty" to attend the conference on Jan. 25 and 26 in a bid to get the country out of the political impasse of the past two years.

Some parties have expressed doubts about the weight being given to the conference, believing that there are other ways of finding a solution.

Removing army chiefs from the central committee of the FLN in 1989 marked the start of the transition from one-party stage to multi-party democracy.

Democratisation was effectively suspended in January 1992 to prevent the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from winning power in the second round of a general election.

Fundamentalists have frequently attacked the security forces, and since November have been waging a campaign against foreigners.

The latest victim, 45-year-old French consular employee Monique Afri, was shot dead in Algiers on Saturday, the 26th foreigner and fourth French national to be killed since late September.

Some 50 Islamic fundamentalists have been freed from a detention centre at Ain M'guel in the far south, where they were held for more than a year, the Al Watan daily reported Monday.

Further releases were expected within coming weeks, the newspaper said.

The move was announced last week by the spokesman of the National Dialogue Commission (CDN), Abdul Kader Benslah, at the behest of political parties due to meet in the national conference.

The president of the official National Human Rights Observatory, Kamel Rezag-Bara, has said 780 people remain detained at Ain M'guel and at Oued Namous in the southwest of Algeria.

The president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, Abdul Nour al-Yahia, has lost his part of the number of detainees at almost 1,000.

Iryani quits Yemeni cabinet over census

SANAA (Agencies) — Yemeni Planning and Development Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani, an influential northern, has quit his post — the first ministerial resignation of an acute political crisis between north and south.

Yemen's two main political parties have been feuding for months and accuse each other of massing troops along the border which divided north and south into separate states until 1990.

But the issue which sparked Mr. Iryani's departure was a national census, due to be completed in five days time, the northern newspaper Al Mithaq reported Monday.

Prime Minister Haidar Abu Bakr Al Attas, a southerner, has scrapped the count and Mr. Iryani, a former foreign minister and a supporter of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, resigned in protest, Al Mithaq said.

The Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), which is headed by Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beedh and ruled the south before unification, accused Mr. Saleh's General People Congress (GPC) on Sunday of moving troops towards the former borders and smuggling weapons into the south.

Mr. Saleh's party responded that the charges were a cover up of the YSP's own troop movements towards the former border.

The two parties are nominal

Somalis give mixed signals on peace deal

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Warring Somali factions gave mixed reactions Monday to a peace treaty between Mogadishu's clans and stressed that it fell far short of settling their political differences.

Self-styled Interim President Ali Mahdi Muhammad welcomed the agreement signed Sunday by traditional leaders of his Abgal sub-clan and the Habr Gedir of his enemy, factional leader Mohammed Farah Aided.

"It is the first step in a broad peacemaking process," he told reporters. But he added: "We have a long way to go," and described the treaty as "fragile and delicate."

Issa Muhammad Siad, foreign affairs secretary of General Aided's Somali National Alliance (SNA) faction, declined to talk to reporters.

Appearing to reject the treaty, he sent word through an aide that the SNA would not comment on it "because it was not a political issue, only an agreement reached at a traditional clan gathering."

SNA supporter Abdi Abshir Kahye said the clans could settle "small, local issues like punishing criminals," but their authority did not extend to "big political questions."

The treaty, hammered out by 176 clan elders and religious leaders in three days of talks, calls for the clans to live in peace, end the division of Mogadishu and return property looted during the civil war.

But the two warlords themselves neither signed the agreement nor attended the talks, reserved for clan elders and closed to politicians.

A vicious power struggle still divides the two men whose fighters gutted Mogadishu in four months of carnage before the first U.S. marines landed in

Major says no role in 'Iraqgate'

LONDON (Agencies) — Prime Minister John Major Monday testified he neither participated in nor had knowledge of British military sales to Iraq in the years preceding the Gulf war in violation of a U.N. embargo.

"I am very reluctant to make a judgement with hindsight about what might have been in the minds of ministers some years earlier," he told the Scott inquiry looking into the sales.

Mr. Major, the first serving prime minister to be grilled at an official inquiry, went further than any other witness in Lord Justice Scott's "Iraqgate" probe by contesting testimony that rules had in fact been secretly altered by ministers in 1988.

"The first time I was actually aware that guidelines had been looked at in 1988 and a change considered was actually on 13th November 1992," said Mr. Major, who insisted he was never involved in administering or interpreting the guidelines.

Mr. Major said it was the main job of the inquiry he set up in November 1992 to decide whether the government had knowingly broken its rules governing arms sales to Iraq before the war, which began exactly three years ago on Jan. 17, 1991.

Aides maintain Mr. Major has nothing to fear from the inquiry and his links to "Iraqgate" are peripheral. Foreign secretary for four months in 1989, Mr. Major was then chancellor of the exchequer (finance minister) before taking over as prime minister in November 1990 from Margaret Thatcher.

Lord Scott and Presley Baxendale, the counsel to the inquiry, repeatedly pressed Mr. Major on why he maintained in letters to members of parliament and ordinary Britons that the guidelines were unchanged in the late 1980s from those established in 1984.

Earlier witnesses, including ministers who were involved, said these regulations had been relaxed in late 1988 to Iraq's advantage. Mr. Major's first big decision as foreign secretary in July 1989 was whether to sell Hawk trainer aircraft to Iraq.

Mr. Major said he did not see several letters and memoranda in which a relaxation of policy towards Iraq was mentioned. He said that while a relaxation may have been considered, he was unsure whether it had actually been implemented.

"Whether it was a change of rules is not for me to judge," he said. "With very great respect it is not for me to reach the conclusion that I have asked the inquiry to reach."

Pressed on the details of answers he had given on the sales to the Labour opposition during House of Commons question time, Mr. Major finally shot back: "If you mean, was I making a cunning and clever distinction to hide something I didn't want to reveal, the answer is 'no'."

Robin Cook, Labour's shadow trade and industry secretary, afterward termed Mr. Major's testimony "both clear and discreditable."

"His alibi is that he did not know what was going on in the department for which he was responsible," said Cook.